2.2 Building Academic Skills through General Education

Introduction: Setting the Stage for General Education Reform

The last decade at California State University, Long Beach has been one of nearly constant change. As the campus emerged from a period of declining budgets and enrollment in the early 1990s into the relative prosperity and growth of the last several years, the faculty have attempted to respond to the needs of students with major improvements in the undergraduate curriculum. Nowhere are these alterations more evident than in the general education program.

At the time of the last WASC visit, the review team recommended that the University re-examine the goals and objectives of its general education program and assess the impact of the program on students as well as its success in meeting its stated goals. The recommendation included a call for extensive input from both faculty and students in this re-examination. The recommended re-examination did take place, and the result was the adoption of a revised general education program effective with the Fall 1999 semester.

The new program began to take shape in concept in 1994 and 1995 with the work of the Task Force on Undergraduate Education. That group, composed of ten faculty members and a student representative, set out to examine four areas: the development of student academic skills, the general education program, advising issues, and co-curricular activities. Each area was studied by a working group that included faculty from the task force, additional faculty and staff with expertise or interest in that area, and student representatives. Ultimately, the full Task Force issued a report recommending a revised General Education, a requirement that all students participate in community or campus service or internship projects, and an increased emphasis on academic advising. Many of the advising reforms implemented since then (recommended in other key reports at about the same time) are described in Part II, Section 2.3 (pages 105-109) on services to students. The general education recommendations called for implementing a 3-tiered program to be taken in sequence, beginning with fundamental academic skills (the first tier), continuing with attainment of breadth of knowledge in the second tier, and concluding with a focus on integrative skills in the final tier. The general education plan now in effect closely resembles the one proposed in 1995 by the Task Force; and it includes an explicit recognition of community service learning as a component of the “Capstone” phase of the general education experience.

While the final outcome of General Education reform may bear a strong resemblance to this early report, the actual process of developing the policy included extensive faculty input over a period of several years. This consultative process really began with a “call to arms” by the Provost at the annual Academic Senate Retreat in 1995. His call for “revolution” in the General Education program inspired many faculty members to press for a campus-wide review. In Spring 1996, a group of faculty members and administrators began meeting regularly at the invitation of the Provost to begin shaping the process. This group articulated a set of four principles which guided all subsequent discussion: distinction for CSULB, flexibility to change and improve over time, demonstrable student outcomes based on high standards, and coherence in the general education curriculum. To further its efforts, the University sent
a team to the 1996 Asheville Institute on General Education and, in addition, sponsored faculty members to attend other conferences and workshops with a focus on either general education reform or the undergraduate student experience.

Two noteworthy events marked this phase of the process. The first was an all-University convocation in May 1996, with Ernest Pascarella as the keynote speaker and workshop sessions dedicated to developing goals and outcomes for general education. About two hundred faculty members participated in this convocation. The second event, also sponsored by the Office of Academic Affairs, was a late-summer retreat involving around 150 faculty members, staff, and administrators who heard presentations on the Asheville Institute and on various campus activities related to general education and then brainstormed further on the various aspects of the general education program. The retreat spawned nine task forces, each tackling a different aspect of the general education reform challenge, and ultimately involving over 70 faculty and staff. Task force themes included Skills and Competencies, Integrated Themes, Faculty Involvement, Diversity, Learning Communities, First Year Cornerstone (since renamed Foundation), Assessment, Capstone Experience, and Budget.

The discussion group convened by the Provost continued to meet and to work with the task forces. At the Fall 1996 Academic Senate retreat, one year after the Provost had issued his challenge to the campus community, the new plan (entitled “Pathways to Distinction”) was unveiled. This event was the beginning, rather than the end, of the consultative process, however. From Fall 1996 through Spring 1998, intense discussions were held across the campus on the merits of the plan and the directions any revisions should take. Key actors in this process included the Planning and Educational Policies (PEP) Council, which had primary responsibility for proposing new academic policies to the Academic Senate; the General Education Governing Committee, which had oversight over the general education program; and faculty leadership in the colleges, especially the College of Liberal Arts. Each college’s faculty council was invited to provide input, and most did. In addition, open meetings to collect input were held. While these activities were underway, an ad hoc committee composed of senior administrators, deans, and faculty in key leadership roles began meeting to consider potential implementation issues.

As part of the “pre-implementation” effort, the first General Education Summer Institute (GESI) was held in the summer 1997. Since the final shape of the program (or even whether the campus would adopt a new program) had yet to be determined, the institute focused on practical strategies for teaching fundamental academic skills in general education courses. Realizing that CSULB was not alone in pondering the direction of general education, the campus also hosted a regional conference for nearby CSU campuses, at which the topic was the issues and challenges of implementing general education reform. Another activity undertaken in this phase was a survey of student attitudes and experiences in general education. In late Fall 1997, students in five large general education courses were asked to rate a number of potential objectives of a general education program; 355 students responded. Among the findings were the following:

• Academic skills were highly valued by responding students. Critical thinking and lifelong learning were the most highly valued (88 percent of the students ranked them as important or highly important). Others valued by 75 percent or more of respondents included computer skills, writing, oral communication, synthesizing informa-
• Among possible general education revisions, feedback that guides learning and opportunities to explore new ideas were the most positively rated (more than 80 percent important or highly important). A successful first year and advising were also judged to be quite important. Students also desired opportunities for academic relationships with other students and a chance to gain an understanding of the purposes of general education.

• Asked about distribution requirements, the students rated “personal development” and “cultural diversity” most highly.

After hearing from numerous constituencies, the PEP Council decided that it would be necessary to return to the drawing board to construct a substitute proposal that would retain the best features of the existing general education policy while addressing some common (and substantive) concerns. The substitute proposal was circulated for input in Fall 1997, and by Spring 1998 the Academic Senate approved the plan for implementation in the Fall 1999 semester.

A. Goals of the CSULB General Education Program

What are the goals of the General Education program at CSULB? Are students and faculty aware of these goals?

1. Goals and Structure of the General Education Program

The California State University, Long Beach General Education Policy (P.S. 00-00) is built upon the elements identified by the faculty in the consultative process just described. Coherence is achieved through the creation of a sequenced general education curriculum beginning with the Foundation, continuing through Explorations, and concluding with the Capstone. Coherence is furthered through the mechanism of Pathways, subsets of the available general education courses organized thematically or around the needs of particular groups of students. Flexibility is achieved through the creation of a rich variety of courses, rigorously reviewed, designed to meet the needs of a highly diverse community of students. An expectation that the program will change and improve over time is built in with expectations of ongoing assessment of the program, along with recommendations for change as necessary. Demonstrable student outcomes in terms of development of key academic skills are required both in the Foundation, which must be completed in the first 36 baccalaureate units, and in subsequent stages of the program, notably in the Capstone, where advanced college skills must be developed. Among the areas in which the program capitalizes on the distinctive features of CSULB are the requirements for courses focused on global issues and on issues of human diversity, and the provision for Capstone courses with a community service learning component. The section that follows describes the elements of the general education program in detail.

The California State University, Long Beach General Education Policy begins with the following statement:
The goal of the bachelor's degree is to produce educated individuals. The components of an undergraduate education include the major, in which the student acquires depth of knowledge, electives that allow a student to explore personal or career-related interests, and general education. General education allows students to develop competency in academic skills that are essential to all academic majors. In addition, general education offers students broad knowledge beyond the focus of the major, as well as exposure to the rich diversity of the human experience. General education should foster habits of mind that lead to lifelong learning, and prepare graduates for full and productive lives.

The General Education program at CSULB is organized as a hierarchy that demands mastery of academic skills along with a pattern of coursework that will provide graduates with an understanding of self, the physical world, the development and functioning of human society, and its cultural and artistic endeavors, as well as an understanding of the methodologies, value systems, and thought processes employed in human inquiries.

These two paragraphs succinctly set out the goals of the general education program. In order to address these goals, the policy sets out three stages of general education. These three stages are the Foundation, Explorations, and Capstone.

The Foundation addresses the student’s first year with special attention to the development and improvement of fundamental academic skills critical to student success in college. Within the first 36 units taken at the University, students are expected to complete one 3-unit course each in written composition in English, oral communications, mathematical concepts and quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking, with a grade of C or better, as well as a one-unit seminar, University 100, The University and Your Future. Critical ancillary skills include the ability to read for information, information retrieval skills, the use of the library (explicitly addressed in University 100), and basic computer skills. In addition, the policy commits the University to providing opportunities for incoming students to participate in learning communities.

To reinforce the importance of the Foundation, as well as to establish performance expectations for students beyond the Foundation, all other 100-level General Education courses require one or more pre-or co-requisites from the Foundation, and all general education courses numbered at the 200 (sophomore) level or higher require completion of the Foundation as a prerequisite.

Explorations courses provide the student with an opportunity to explore human knowledge in many disciplines:

Although the primary purpose of Explorations is the development of breadth of knowledge, it is expected that all courses will offer opportunities for continued development of skills [first addressed in the Foundation], Reading, writing, oral discussion and presentation, problem-solving, and/or quantitative reasoning, and critically-and analytically-based research are central to the learning of content.

In addition, as students progress through their Explorations, they will be expected to develop additional skills and attributes, including ethical reasoning, analytical reading, creativity, respect for differences, awareness of other cultures, questioning of stereotypes, the values of citizenship, negotiating
The Capstone's purpose is to bring the strands of the general education experience into focus, to reinforce knowledge and skills acquired from many areas, and to incorporate depth in the form of more sophisticated tools and analysis. Each Capstone course has as its pre-requisites completion of the entire Foundation requirement and at least one Explorations course, as well as upper-division standing. Each student must complete 9 units of Capstone courses. The focus of the Capstone shifts to more advanced college skills:

- Interdisciplinary courses. Interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary courses will bring together perspectives of two or more academic disciplines in the exposition or treatment of a particular topic or problem;

- Advanced Skills courses (no more than 3 units out of 9), covering, for example, advanced composition, research and information retrieval skills, or presentation skills, from a disciplinary perspective. These courses may extend the Foundation areas, or may focus on skills of value to the college graduate that are not explicitly identified in the Foundation;

- Service Learning courses (no more than 3 units out of 9). Such courses will include a University or community service experience, along with clearly defined academic content and critical reflection on the service as an integral part of the course.

The Interdisciplinary course classification existed under the previous policy. Advanced Skills and Service Learning Capstone courses represent new initiatives. All of these courses must have a major integrative assignment that allows the student to demonstrate Capstone skills.

Over the course of these stages, each student will complete a set of distribution requirements. The basic General Education Breadth Requirements for all campuses in the CSU system are given in Title 5, Article 40405, of the California Code of Regulations. CSULB has responded to this requirement as described in the following statement (from its General Education Policy Statement 00-00).

Each California State University, Long Beach baccalaureate graduate shall have completed a minimum of 51 semester units of GE courses distributed as follows:

- Category A. Nine units in Communication in the English language and Critical Thinking;
- Category B. Twelve units in the Physical Universe;
- Category C. Twelve units in Humanities and the Arts;
- Category D. Fifteen units in Social and Behavioral Sciences and History;
- Category E. Three units in Self-Integration.

While meeting these requirements, students must also select at least one three-unit course that addresses global issues or world societies and culture (Global Issues) and one three-unit course that deals with
human diversity in the United States. The Human Diversity requirement, which has been in place since 1993, examines issues of diversity and multiculturalism in the United States. Global Issues courses offer a parallel focus on world societies and cultures. This requirement can be met from any of the five categories above, provided that the course either considers the whole world as its field of inquiry or engages in a sustained and systematic comparison of two major world regions or societies. While the latter approach may include the United States in its comparative treatment, the U.S. must not be “privileged” in such a comparison. Because this requirement is meant to focus the lens of inquiry outside the United States, while the Human Diversity requirement looks inward, a course is not permitted to hold certification for both requirements.

Many transfer students complete a “certified” program of general education at a California community college. For students with such certification, the remaining general education requirements can normally be met within the 9 units of Capstone courses. Students with certification are not required to complete a Global Issues course, but they are held to the requirement for a Human Diversity course.

As part of an effort to increase the coherence of individual students’ general education programs, the policy calls for the creation of Pathways, suggested sequences of courses that meet general education requirements. A Pathway might offer a student the opportunity to explore a particular area of interest, complement and make connections to a major field of study, or use general education to learn more about potential majors.

The General Education program that was approved in 1998 as PS 98-00 was revised in Spring 2000 to include a new section (vi) on global issues courses. The revised General Education Policy is PS 00-00.

2. Student Awareness of Goals

Freshmen have their first formal exposure to the general education program during the Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration (SOAR) activities prior to their first semester of enrollment. The role of general education in “total program planning” is introduced, as are the various program requirements. This introduction, however, is necessarily brief and focused on helping students plan a program for their first semester at CSULB. Thus, it is likely that few students truly understand the relevance of general education to their academic programs or careers at this time.

For most students, a deeper understanding of the role of general education as part of a degree program begins with their participation in the mandatory advising program coordinated by the Academic Advising Center. Students must complete an advising workshop prior to registration for their second semester at the University. The workshops provide an opportunity for advisors to reinforce the information introduced at SOAR as well as to encourage students to carefully consider their academic and personal goals. Students engage in an activity called “the game.”

[The game] is an innovative, developmental advising approach that requires that students imagine themselves ten years in the future. As they develop scenarios around their imagined careers, Center staff help students to choose GE and elective courses to achieve the specific academic and career goals of

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1 A detailed discussion of SOAR may be found in Part III, Section 2.3, page 106.
these new freshmen. At each workshop, students suggest particular courses to each other based on career scenarios. Advisors then make additional suggestions based on perceived majors or freshman career ideals. The goal is to have freshmen develop coherent academic plans and to understand that students have many choices and options to create an academic program that truly meets their needs. (From an Academic Advising Center handout.)

Students also receive a checklist that enables them to determine where they stand in their knowledge of general education requirements. At this time, no formal assessment has been made of the effectiveness of this advising process in helping students understand the goals of the general education program. Anecdotal evidence, however, is very encouraging, as are limited samples of freshman programs. It should be noted that at the present this is the only mandatory advising visit required of all students except for the requirement that all students visit an advisor to prepare a graduation plan approximately 9 months before completing their degrees. In addition, most faculty advising is focused on requirements of the major rather than on general education requirements. Thus, our expectations for this component of the advising program are quite high.

At the mandatory advising session, the Academic Advising Center has for several years asked students to fill out a survey that inquires about their current schedule, impressions to date, and such issues as how many hours a week are spent studying for classes and student awareness of campus resources for students. The survey could be modified to assess student awareness of general education program goals in the future. It can also provide baseline information since it represents a series of snapshots of the freshman experience over a several-year period that spans the introduction of the current general education program.

The General Education Policy includes the following charge to the one-unit University 100:

It shall introduce students to the history of universities (including the history, mission, and character of CSULB) and current issues in higher education. It shall introduce students to the use of our academic research libraries and also introduce them to the skills essential for success in an academic environment.

While this charge does not explicitly require that University 100 discuss the general education program, the standard course outline for University 100 includes consideration of the role of general education as a required focus. In addition to readings that discuss the characteristics of an educated person and the value of a liberal education, the course workbook includes an exercise in which students are asked to imagine that they have been invited to design the undergraduate curriculum at a new California State University campus. The exercise requires students to consider what components should be present in the general education program or to justify a curriculum that does not include general education. University 100 does not attempt to advise students regarding CSULB general education requirements, concentrating instead on the purposes of general education in a baccalaureate degree.

Another potential opportunity for discussion of goals comes in the individual courses that make up the general education program. While the general education policy asks that course developers make students aware of the methodologies and mindsets of the disciplines being explored, it does not ask course developers to discuss the relationship of their courses to the overall goals of general
education. Asking course developers to include such a discussion in their general education course syllabi may be an avenue that needs further exploration.

3. Faculty Awareness of Goals

Over the past five years, numerous opportunities have existed for the faculty to become informed about, and help shape, the goals of general education. In addition to the various workshops, retreats, and discussions described in the introduction, efforts to inform and involve faculty have continued over the last several years. Especially thoughtful work has occurred in the College of Liberal Arts, which has made general education reform the topic for all or parts of several college retreats. Events to inform faculty and staff about proposed changes have been staged in several other colleges as well, either for general audiences or for such targeted groups as undergraduate advisors. In September 1998, the Provost sponsored a day-long retreat for campus leaders, including department chairs, deans, and additional faculty and staff representing key areas. The retreat, with an attendance of about 80, focused on identifying challenges associated with the coming implementation effort.

The General Education Summer Institute (GESI) that was initiated in 1997 has been offered annually since. The program has always included sessions on developing student skills in written and oral communication. Other topics have varied, based on evaluations by faculty and the demands of implementing the program; they have included workshops on building critical thinking and quantitative reasoning skills, grading and testing, establishment of learning communities, and assessment. In the last two years new topics have included information competency, diversity in the classroom, development of Pathways, use of technology in the classroom, and developing general education course proposals. This last topic, in particular, deals directly with the goals of general education, whereas most of the others pertain to actualization of the goals. An evaluation of the institutes carried out every year asks, among other things, how successful participants believe implementation of general education reform will be; response to this question has grown more positive every year. Other questions explore participants’ evaluation of the utility of the program. For example, when 1999 GESI participants were asked how likely they would be to use ideas from the workshop to change their teaching during the following semester, 88 percent responded that they would make such changes. When asked whether the changes in teaching would improve their students’ learning, 98 percent replied affirmatively. It would be interesting to follow up with previous GESI and General Education Winter Institute (GEWI) participants to see the extent to which these positive predictions were realized.

GESI has attracted 80–120 participants each year and is open to all full- and part-time faculty. It typically occurs shortly before the newly hired faculty arrive on campus. In an effort to involve more of these new faculty in discussions of general education, a General Education Winter Institute (GEWI) was held in January 2000, with about 80 faculty in attendance, many of whom first arrived at CSULB for the 1999–2000 academic year. A second GEWI with 100 participants was staged in January 2001. As a way to encourage attendance (both institutes are offered between regular academic sessions), the University offers a small stipend for participation.

Other venues where information about general education has been disseminated are the First Year Experience group, a network of staff and faculty with shared interest in students in their first year at CSULB, and the Academic Advising Council, which includes the college’s faculty advising liaisons as well
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as staff advisors. These groups have in turn shared information with their constituencies and have helped both to raise issues and to develop coping strategies.

However, it is probably fair to state that the majority of the faculty is familiar only with the broadest aspects of the general education program. Most become aware of the details only as a result of preparing materials to be submitted in support of a request that a particular course be approved for general education credit. In addition, faculty who serve on reviewing committees, such as college curriculum committees or the General Education Governing Committee, are also generally aware of the details of the program. Faculty who are neither teaching general education courses nor taking responsibility for course development are not likely to have given much thought to general education goals. Section C, below, discusses additional issues related to the role of the faculty in general education. At this time, there is no formal assessment of the degree to which faculty in general are aware of the activities and goals of general education.

4. Recommendations and Remaining Challenges

• Assess the effectiveness of the current process for helping students understand their educational goals (e.g., SOAR orientation and mandatory advising).

• Assess faculty awareness of the goals of the general education program. Find ways to better inform faculty across the University about those goals and encourage all faculty to explain to students those general education goals reflected in their courses.

• Evaluate the current mandatory advising requirements to determine whether they are adequate to ensure student success and progress in the general education program.

B. Creating Change and Encouraging Innovation in the General Education Curriculum

Are general education courses offering students opportunities to develop and demonstrate important academic skills? Have new curricula and courses been proposed in response to such program initiatives as Advanced Skills Capstones, Service Learning Capstones, and Global Issues courses? Have faculty responded to the challenge of creating opportunities for students to be part of learning communities? Are Pathways being created? Are general education courses taking advantage of appropriate technologies in support of student learning? Are students developing sophisticated skills in the areas of information competency and use of computers?

At the heart of general education reform are the changes in courses and curricula in response to changes in policy. This portion of the report examines the extent to which the curricular changes called for in the new general education policy have in fact been implemented, as well as the steps necessary to complete the process of implementation, the challenges we are likely to face, and recommendations for the future.

The new general education policy creates several opportunities for curricular change in support of the goals of the program. One key area is the establishment of expectations for the development of specific academic skills at each level of the program. At all levels, it is incumbent upon faculty to identify appropriate learning outcomes, to use instructional approaches that support students’ skill development, as well as to design assessment measures that allow students to demonstrate these skills.
A second opportunity comes from the fact that the new policy created several new categories of general education courses. These include the Global Issues requirement and the Capstone requirement, including Interdisciplinary, Advanced Skills, and Service Learning Capstones. A third initiative called for by the General Education policy is the creation of Pathways. Pathways were envisioned primarily as advising tools that would bring additional coherence to the general education program while preserving the impressively diverse choices that our program offers. In effect, a Pathway could help the student to select a group of courses that would meet his or her individual needs. As defined in the general education policy, participation in a Pathway is voluntary, but completion of a Pathway completes all general education requirements. Pathways may be proposed by individuals or, ideally, by groups of faculty from several disciplines. The policy also states that all entering freshmen should have opportunities to participate in learning communities, although it merely suggests the form that such communities might take.

Finally, while the new general education policy does not call for an explicit certification of either computer literacy or information competency, it encourages the incorporation of opportunities for students to develop such competencies, especially in the first year.

1. Establishing Change

A host of technical changes were required before the new general education program could be implemented successfully. Although the Academic Senate approved the general education policy in Spring 1998, the policy did not become effective until Fall 1999, allowing a full academic year for the necessary changes to appear in the University Catalog, the Schedule of Classes, and other channels of student information. This delay proved to be barely adequate, because of the long lead times for publication of the catalog and schedule. Yet implementation was accomplished successfully as a result of the combined efforts of the faculty members responsible for hundreds of changes to individual course descriptions, administrators in Academic Affairs, an Enrollment Services task force that identified potential problems and worked to implement solutions, advising staff across the campus and especially in the Academic Advising Center, Student Services staff who work with incoming students, and the various faculty governance bodies. To facilitate this complex process, the Provost appointed a faculty Coordinator for General Education Implementation.

Because of new provisions governing course numbering and prerequisites, it was necessary to process changes in the descriptions of nearly all general education courses, along with about two dozen changes in course numbers. To speed the process, the University suspended its normal policy of only allowing such changes to be made within a full year’s lead time (a policy designed to facilitate articulation with the community colleges); without this suspension, the changes would not have taken effect until Fall 2000.

A substantive issue for faculty was consideration of the appropriate pre- or co-requisites for Explorations courses. Explorations courses numbered at the 100 (freshman) level can be taken concurrently with the Foundation, but they must have one or more pre- or co-requisites from the Foundation. While many departments offering such courses opted for the minimal co-requisite of any Foundation course, others took the opportunity to tailor the prerequisites to course expectations. Thus, the Department of Economics attached a mathematics pre- or co-requisite to its course on microeconomics. The Department of Chicano and Latino Studies restructured its two introductory
general education courses to put a greater focus on written communication in one (with an English composition co-requisite) and an emphasis on oral presentations in the other (with an Oral Communication co-requisite). In a similar manner, faculty considered whether courses should be at the 100 level, making them available to first-time freshmen, or at the 200 level, where all general education courses require completion of the Foundation as a prerequisite. Such courses as world history and human biology were renumbered at the 200 level to establish more advanced skills requirements for students.

At the same time that faculty were taking care of the mechanics of numerous catalog changes, the General Education Governing Committee (GEGC) was grappling with the challenge of how to review courses for inclusion in the general education program effectively and expeditiously. One of the committee’s first actions was to adopt a rough timeline in which Foundation courses would be due as soon as possible, lower-division Explorations courses at the end of the Fall 1999 semester, and upper-division and Capstone courses in the 2000–2001 academic year. Before any courses could be submitted, however, it was necessary for the GEGC to propose guidelines for their review. This task, in turn, made it obvious that a more thorough definition of student learning outcomes in the Foundation areas was needed, along with standards by which the GEGC could determine whether an Explorations course was fulfilling the requirement that it continue to develop one or more Foundation skills. Working groups consisting of faculty from each of the four Foundation areas (written and oral communication in the English language, critical thinking, and quantitative reasoning) were established, with participation by members of the GEGC as well. Each group ultimately produced a position paper that identified the goals and objectives for its Foundation area, offered suggestions for classroom activities designed to develop the Foundation skill, and discussed assessment of student learning outcomes. These reports informed the Interim General Education Guidelines, published in November 1998. The reports are available to faculty with an interest in incorporating academic skill development in any of these areas; they are posted on the Academic Senate Web site, along with the course review guidelines.

2. Evidence for Change

Instructional practices and skill development

In the first year and a half under the new rules, the GEGC reviewed over 110 courses. In many cases the outlines for these courses have been substantially redesigned, to the point where they bear little resemblance to the syllabi from previous semesters. Much of the change has come in the form of standardization of multi-section courses. All multi-section courses are required to provide an explanation of how each section is made to comply with the course objectives and learning outcomes. Reported practices range from informal systems in which all individuals teaching a particular course meet at the beginning of the year, to coordination through the department chair who discusses expectations with each instructor, to formal systems of coordination with considerable structure. For example, the Department of Psychology, which offers a Foundation course in critical thinking, asks each instructor teaching that course to compile a portfolio of course materials, including student samples, for review by the course coordinator. Some of these coordination strategies are discussed in Section C.2, below.

All departments offering general education courses have been asked to identify explicitly the particular academic skills that will be developed and to explain both the instructional strategies to be used and the forms of assessment that will measure their
effectiveness. In response to this challenge, many departments have developed or borrowed evaluative rubrics, especially for writing. The requirement of frequent and early feedback to students has resulted, in many cases, in an increased number of assignments that require written work.

It is now possible to cite some significant examples of changes in course practices designed to promote skill development, especially for first-time students. Music 190 (A Listener’s Approach to Music) previously was a large-lecture course only. Since the advent of the new general education program, the course continues to meet in lectures of up to 100 students, but the Department of Music now designates a portion of its meeting time for small breakout sessions of about 20 each to foster discussion and to allow for increased writing. A new version of Geography 140 (Physical Geography) has been created that includes occasional activities, lab exercises, and/or a field trip, while a “spin-off” of that course, Geography 150 (Planet Earth: An Introduction) features an activity or field experience every week. Structured breakouts have also been incorporated into other courses, such as Geography 100W (World Regional Geography), Philosophy 100 (Introduction to Philosophy) and 160 (Introduction to Ethics), and Religious Studies 100 (Introduction to Religion).

The extent to which these changes are having an effect remains to be seen. However, several departments are taking the lead in attempting to develop performance-based assessments to answer this question. The Department of English, for example, not only has developed detailed objectives and student learning outcomes, but it has also moved to requiring that all students prepare a writing portfolio, which is read by members of the composition faculty. This effort began in pre-baccalaureate courses and spread to the Foundation general education offerings with the advent of the new program. Faculty have noted that, along with more carefully defined outcomes have come a shift in standards and expectations, to a greater focus on critical thinking, presentation of multiple points of view, use of documentation, and other skills associated with academic writing. Likewise, the Department of Communication Studies now asks all students in Foundation oral communication classes to complete pre- and post-tests in the areas of communication competence, willingness to communicate, and communication apprehension. In addition, the department has begun experimenting with videotaping small group discussions and oral presentations, which are then evaluated by a panel of experts to determine whether particular skills have been achieved. These assessments have already led to changes in course assignments to address specific issues.

**Learning communities**

During the period in which general education reform was being discussed, several campus groups established successful learning communities. Probably the best known of these is the Learning Alliance, a program in the College of Liberal Arts under which entering freshmen enroll in three linked classes, two in general education plus an expanded version of University 100. The linkages typically feature at least some cooperation among the instructors and sometimes entail fully integrated classes. The Learning Alliance enrolls 200–300 new students each year. They continue to participate in linked classes throughout their first two years, as well as engaging in community service. The University Honors Program, which takes in 80–90 new students a year, offers small enriched classes, personalized advising, and a variety of opportunities for its students to get to know each other. Student Access to Science focuses on placing students in common classes as freshmen, as well as offering them a chance to work with a peer mentor. Many other examples exist as well.
One of the obstacles to more widespread adoption of learning communities has been the amount of time and energy required to maintain linkages, as the Learning Alliance does. In the summer 2000, Beach Beginnings, a new program within the College of Liberal Arts, was offered to all interested freshmen in the first month of SOAR. The program was managed by the Director of the Learning Alliance. Designated sections of popular large lecture classes, e.g., Psychology 100 (General Psychology), Anthropology 120 (Introduction to Cultural Anthropology), and Geography 100 (World Regional Geography), were linked to several small sections of composition or oral communications classes. Each student then enrolled in the lecture class of her/his choice along with a linked small class. Thus each of the 1100 participating students became part of a 25-student cohort taking 6 to 7 units of classes together for the first semester. While no formal coordination between the instructors of the linked classes was required, a number of faculty members developed activities to strengthen the links between their classes. An additional advantage of the program was that schedule-building was dramatically simplified for these students. Based on positive faculty response and student success in the first semester, a similar number of Beach Beginnings classes were offered in Fall 2001.

The GLOBE program (Global Learning Options for a Broader Education) was also begun in the summer 2000. This endeavor, which has gone from 25 students in its first semester of operation to more than 50 at present, is designed to create a learning community focused on exploration of the world’s cultures and global issues. Its ultimate goal is to increase the number of CSULB students choosing to study abroad.

These examples are not all-inclusive. Numerous other programs offer opportunities for new students to be part of a community, with more or less structured curricular components. Gradually, the campus is approaching its goal of offering such opportunities to all students.

Special Initiatives
When the general education policy was adopted, the Global Issues requirement existed as an idea but had not been carefully defined. Over the 1999–2000 year, conversations involving the International Education Committee and the GEGC (both subcommittees of the Planning and Educational Policies Council) led to the development of a concise definition of “global issues” as courses that, as their central focus, either consider the world as a whole or engage in sustained and systematic comparison between at least two major world regions or significantly distinct societies, at least one of which must be outside the United States. Since the publication of these new criteria, the GEGC has received a number of requests for consideration of courses to meet this requirement. The effect of the criteria will be to expand beyond the social sciences (the home of the previous “world societies and cultures” requirement) the disciplines in which such courses may be found. Thus, a course in comparative religious ethics that meets the Humanities requirement in the area of Philosophy was recently approved because its focus is a sustained comparison of ethics in the world’s major religions.

The GEGC has most recently begun considering Capstone courses of all types, and has reviewed and approved the first “Advanced Skills” course. Several other courses of this type are anecdotally in development in such areas as advanced composition and oral communication. The one course approved to date actually focuses on the development of advanced quantitative skills by teaching about electronics through music. No Service Learning Capstones are in place yet. However, a recent workshop sponsored by the Community Service
Learning Center and the General Education Implementation Coordinator attracted a number of individuals with an interest in developing such courses.

The Pathways component of the general education program, a non-mandatory element, has essentially been on the “back burner” for the past two years. While any number of informal discussions have taken place, only a small number of Pathways have reached draft stage. A team of faculty from the International Education Committee has pulled together perhaps the most promising Pathway (the International Pathway). When this proposal is complete and available for distribution, it would presumably be attractive to any student with an interest in world issues, travel or study abroad, or simply learning more about the diverse peoples of the planet. Other Pathway ideas under discussion have included recommendations for students with an interest in the health professions, a Pathway for students with an interest in secondary school teaching, and Pathways built around existing certificate programs. As these and other Pathways take shape, the developers would do well to follow the lead of the International group, which involved faculty from four different disciplines and tried to create a program that was thoroughly interdisciplinary in nature.

3. Support for change

Since the adoption of the general education policy in 1998, the University has committed significant resources toward implementation of the curricular changes described above. The General Education Summer and Winter Institutes offer modest stipends to faculty members who participate in the workshops. The 2001 GEWI, with 100 participants, was the best-attended institute to that time (since exceeded by the 2001 GESI), and a significant number of participants had not participated in a previous workshop. In addition to the institutes, the Center for Faculty Development offers an incentive program through which faculty can receive grants to develop and present workshops to their colleagues during the academic year; a similar program supports faculty travel to conferences and workshops devoted to issues in teaching and learning. The Educational Innovations Awards program is the major University-level program that provides assigned time, summer stipends, or supplies to individuals who wish to develop new courses and curricula. For the past two years general education projects have been actively solicited by this program. Examples of recent funded projects have included an effort to revitalize Political Science 100 (Introduction to American Government) and a proposal for the development of general education Capstones in Communication Studies. A permanent budget allocation now supports these and similar activities in support of general education.

The Assessment Grants program also identifies development of general education as a priority. This program is designed to build CSULB’s capacity for conducting assessment of student learning outcomes by providing support for a wide variety of projects initiated by academic departments and programs. Among the funded projects in the last year related to general education were courses in introductory physics, critical thinking, sociology, and oral communication. In addition, a proposal to examine faculty expectations for student writing across the disciplines received support.

Incentive awards are also available to individuals who choose to develop or redevelop curricula with an international focus, through the Internationalizing the Curriculum program. A number of “internationalized” courses are part of the general education program, satisfying the Global Issues requirement. Finally, in the past year the State of California has placed new emphasis on community service learning. The Com-
Community Service Learning Center has funds to support the development of courses, including general education Service Learning Capstones, and is recruiting faculty to undertake such efforts.

Every year, the University receives an allocation from the proceeds of the California State Lottery. These funds are applied in various ways to improve the educational environment of the University. For a number of years, a substantial portion of these funds has been used to support faculty travel. In the 2000–2001 academic year, the University identified travel related to several key initiatives as priorities for support; these included general education, assessment, and service learning.

Since 1998, the University has also provided assigned time for coordination of general education implementation. Coordination will be discussed in greater detail in Section G.

It has been proposed that in 2001–2002, the Educational Innovations Award program and Assessment Grants program be merged together into a new Enhancing Educational Effectiveness Awards program. One of the purposes of such a merger would be to encourage proposals that embed assessment within instructional improvement projects in both general education and non-general education courses. Another purpose would be to encourage activities that are especially needed in general education—such as developing Pathways and assessment of the General Education program as a whole.

4. Delivering Change: The Role of Technology

There are four facets to the role of technology in general education. First, there are the basic skills that every well-rounded college graduate should have acquired by the end of their baccalaureate experience. These skills include simple knowledge about computer mechanics—turning the equipment on and off—and fundamental nomenclature of both hardware and software. These basic skills are learned in a variety of ways in various general education courses. For example, many courses require writing assignments involving multiple drafts and thereby actively use word processing programs for writing, storing, and rewriting essays.

A second facet of technology’s role involves somewhat more advanced skills than simple word processing. Such programs may include spreadsheets, scientific modeling programs, or even computer aided design. A number of general education courses employ spreadsheet programs that allow students to master both entering and manipulation of data. Other courses permit students to examine scientific models of molecular structures.

A third facet involves slightly more abstract skills, such as understanding how to use the Internet to secure information for a literature-based research project, which involves locating appropriate information while excluding irrelevant data. A number of general education courses emphasize both critical thinking and writing. These courses require students to search for and read source materials and then to organize the information that is obtained into a coherent structured essay. The source materials may increasingly be obtained from on-line sources.

Finally, technology may be used in general education courses to organize various types of media employed as pedagogical strategies in the classroom—or to extend the boundaries of the physical classroom. In this connection, an increasing number of general education courses utilize BeachBoard (a Web-based instructional aid similar to the more broadly used Web CT) to integrate
slides, movies, and various audiovisual aids with more traditional pedagogical techniques. These courses utilize more complex and challenging modes of transmission than more traditional lecture-based instruction.

An issue of obvious interest is the extent to which entering students are experienced users of technology or have access to computers at home. The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) freshman survey, described further in Section E, below, queries students about ways in which they use computers, as well as about whether computers are available at school or home. In 1997, 69 percent of students surveyed reported that they had access to a computer at home, while 66 percent indicated that their schools had computers with Internet access. Their computer usage appears to be increasing; for example, from 1998 to 1999, the percentage of students reporting that they frequently used e-mail rose from 28 to 50, while the percentage claiming to use the Internet frequently for homework or research rose from 38 to 62.7. The vast majority (93 percent) of students in 2000 claimed to be either regular or occasional computer users in the preceding year.

There is considerable connectivity and access to computers and computer technology at CSULB. Each entering student receives an e-mail account. The campus provides two major clusters of student computer labs, run by Academic Computing Services (ACS) and featuring nearly 400 workstations. In addition, each of the colleges maintains one or more computer labs for student use. For example, the College of Business Administration maintains 275 student workstations. In some cases, the college-based labs are dedicated to the needs of particular departments and programs. In addition, the Library Computer Lab offers computer services to all currently enrolled CSULB students, as well as staff, faculty, and alumni. Connectivity is possible using Windows or Macintosh platforms (Windows 95, 98, and Me, Windows NT 4.0, Windows 2000, and Mac OS 7.6 to 8.0 and Mac OS 8.5 to 9.0). Basic computer access includes the Internet, e-mail accounts, and space for creating, mounting, and storing a web page.

A number of buildings on campus are already prepared with fiber-optic cables to permit high-speed transference of data.

Two major resources support the development of technological literacy by both students and faculty. Academic Computing Services sponsors frequent workshops for students and faculty on topics ranging from how to use the campus e-mail system or create a Web page to how to set up an entire course in the BeachBoard system. In the Fall 2000 semester, ACS inaugurated its Help Desk, which offers rapid assistance to all campus users with questions about hardware setup and problems with common software. A second important source for training is the Library. To support its training effort, the Library recently opened the Spidell Electronic Classroom, a state-of-the-art facility for hands-on training. Finally, the Department of Computer Engineering and Computer Science offers CECS 110 (Introduction to the Internet), a course designed to introduce students to computer systems, networking, and the Internet. The course is open to all students and is a popular elective among freshmen.

5. Recommendations and Remaining Challenges

- Support and stimulate faculty curricular innovations through campus award programs and faculty development opportunities. Focus this support on areas of the general education program most in need of development, such as Pathways.
• Assess the adequacy and effectiveness of faculty development support for making changes in the general education curriculum, paying special attention to the outcomes of funded projects.

• Gather baseline information on the information competency and computer literacy of entering students and assess the extent to which these competencies are being developed in general education courses.

• Support the necessary training efforts to take advantage of available technologies and to stay abreast of new tools for information access.

• Assess the effectiveness of the structure for supporting curriculum development within the general education program, including the roles of the General Education Governing Committee, General Education Coordinator, other faculty governance bodies, and academic administrators.

C. Incorporating General Education into Department Missions

Are departments that have responsibility for General Education incorporating it as a meaningful part of their mission? How are departments with responsibility for Foundation courses responding to the challenge of staffing these courses?

Since we have only begun to implement the Foundation courses within the revitalized General Education curriculum, it is not yet possible to determine the impact of the new program on planning and staffing across the University. In departments with responsibility for Foundation courses, however, we can discern the early trends with respect to staffing and faculty hiring practices. In general, it remains the case—as was true with the previous General Education program—that most Foundation courses are taught by temporary faculty (called “lecturers” in the CSU). On the other hand, it is equally clear that the departments with primary responsibility for Foundation courses are making serious and generally effective efforts to coordinate instruction in those courses and to integrate the lecturers who teach the courses into the academic life of the department. Given that CSULB lecturers are, by and large, extremely successful classroom instructors, their major role in the delivery of Foundation courses does not necessarily indicate that departments are marginalizing or placing low priority on their responsibilities for Foundation courses.

1. Departmental Staffing of Foundation Courses

Faculty utilization reports by department for the academic year 1999–2000 (the first year of full implementation of the revitalized general education curriculum) clearly reflect the heavy reliance on lecturers for delivery of Foundation courses. An analysis of those reports for the nine departments with responsibility for Foundation courses reveals that in every case a large majority of Foundation courses are being taught by lecturers. The specific data are shown in Table 1.

2. Integration of Lecturers into the General Education Program and Departmental Coordination of Foundation Courses

Lecturers—particularly those who teach general education courses—are well integrated into the University’s faculty development activities. The best examples of this integration are the General Education Summer Institute (GESI) and the General Education Winter Institute (GEWI). These programs were described in section A, above. In
each of the iterations of GESI, half or more of the participants have been lecturers. One of the recurrent favorable comments about GESI by participants has been that it provides an environment where faculty rank and status are irrelevant and participants come together as equals to learn from one another. The same pattern has been observed at the two GEWI offerings, which have also attracted a substantial number of newly hired faculty.\(^2\)

We believe that the coordination and instructional support that are provided by departments engaged in teaching Foundation courses, as well as the University-based programs designed to support all faculty who teach such courses, reflect a shared commitment to general education. Moreover, such coordination and support minimizes the likelihood of general education becoming marginalized within departments, even if the courses are taught primarily by faculty who are at least nominally temporary.

In each of the categories of Foundation courses, significant efforts are being made by the departments to coordinate instruction, whether or not the classes are taught by non-tenure-track lecturers.

**Category A.1, Written Communication.** The Department of English is responsible for the vast majority of classes in this general education category, including pre-baccalaureate writing sections for the almost one-half of the entering freshmen who do not pass the English Placement Test (EPT). The department has standardized English 100 (Composition) and its pre-baccalaureate course because so many full-time and part-time faculty are needed to staff the sections offered each semester. The department is also currently working on revisions of its other general education courses, including English 250A&B (Survey of English Literature), English 205 (introduction to Creative Writing: Fiction), English 206 (Introduction to Creative Writing: Poetry), and English 180 (Appreciation of Literature, designed to conform to the Integrated Teacher Education Program).

The department’s Coordinator for Composition designed criteria to ensure consistency across sections of English 100 (Category A.1) and English 102 (Critical Reading and Writing, in Category A.3). Skill level rubrics were devised and distributed to all instructors; in addition, the composition program conducts orientation meetings and regularly scheduled faculty development workshops throughout the semester.

**Category A.2, Oral Communication.** The University had, for a number of years prior to the implementation of the new general education policy, made an effort to place all entering freshmen into appropriate English and mathematics classes. Thus, the Department of English experienced a substantial growth in the number of sections of composition courses well before any general education changes were implemented (Figure 1). However, until the new general education program was put into effect, CSULB students were not required to complete their Oral Communication early in their programs, nor does this category have a pre-entrance test to place students in an appropriate class that fits their level of oral communication proficiency. All entry-level oral communications classes feature either relatively small sections (enroll

\(^2\)The Center for Faculty Development also offers an ongoing Outreach to Lecturers Program, coordinated by a longtime lecturer who regularly teaches Foundation courses in the Department of English. This program ensures the regular participation of lecturers in pedagogical development programs offered by the Center. The Center has also pioneered a collaborative peer-coaching program focused on pedagogical issues (the PEN Program–Professional Education Network). This program now includes teams of lecturers and tenured and/or tenure-track faculty, as well as teams of just lecturers.
Table 1: Staffing of General Education Foundation Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th># Tenured/ Ten-Track Faculty</th>
<th>#Tenured/Ten-Tr. Faculty Teaching Foundation Courses</th>
<th># Lecturers</th>
<th># Lecturers Teaching Foundation Courses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asian &amp; Asian-American Studies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 1999</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>0</td>
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<tr>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Chicano-Latino Studies</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>22</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2000</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td><strong>Mathematics</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 1999</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>35</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Philosophy</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 1999</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2000</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Psychology</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>27</td>
<td>0</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring 2000</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>8</td>
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</table>

In order to accommodate general education changes as well as growth in the freshmen class, the Department of Communication Studies has dramatically increased its offerings over the last two years. The number of sections offered by the department in the four freshman-level oral communications courses, which had been relatively constant at 40 to 50 each fall semesters, has now climbed to between 70 and 90, a 75% increase.
ter for several years, jumped from 50 in 1998 to 74 in 1999 to 96 in 2000.

The department devised a set of “oral communication standards” to insure the similar development of core communication skills in all four of its general education Category A.2 classes—130 (Essentials of Public Speaking), 132 (Small Group Discussion), 171 (Voice and Articulation), and 110 (Interpersonal Communication). The department has also started to work on a pre-entrance “Communication Competency” placement test; this will be the first systematic effort in the nation to identify students’ oral communication skills and then place them into classes according to levels of communication apprehension.

The department also instituted the first two parts of a sequence of assessments in its Category A.2 courses. All students in general education A.2 courses were given a pre-test during the first week of classes and a post-test during the last week of classes in the Fall 1999 semester to document shifts in their communication skills. Not surprisingly, early results suggest that public speaking and interpersonal communication courses lead to the greatest development of confidence and competence in oral communication, while small group discussion and voice and articulation courses enhance skills attainment, but are less successful in reducing apprehension about public speaking. A second assessment project consisted of having instructors rate students on their oral communication skills by grading speeches and group deliberations at the beginning of the semester and then again at the end of the semester to gauge increases in skills attainment. The analysis of this data is still ongoing but is promising, because it will shape the department’s modifications of instructional practices as it adds instruction and assignments in key skills areas.

Category A.3, Critical Thinking. Several academic departments teach courses for Category A.3, Critical Thinking, including History, English, Philosophy, Psychology, and Communication Studies, with the largest enrollments being generated in Philosophy and Psychology.

The Department of Philosophy has worked diligently to standardize the multiple sections of its Philosophy 170 (Elementary Logic) course, posting the full text of the standard course outline on its faculty web site and setting up a series of meetings with all course faculty to discuss instructional standards and strategies. The department has also urged its critical thinking faculty to adopt new technology in their classes, particularly Beach Board.

The Department of Psychology has a course coordinator for its Psychology 130 (Critical Thinking) sections, which were all standardized to insure consistency among the instructors. The standard course outline includes details on instructional strategies designed to de-emphasize the use of a lecture format, and all instructors are required to submit a course portfolio including tests, in-class activities, written assignments, and a statement of teaching philosophy. The revisions to the course are designed to provide students with multiple opportunities to practice and improve their skills. The department believes that enhancing instructional effectiveness in these sections is the first step in the assessment of student skill-building and attainment.

Category B.2, Mathematics. The Department of Mathematics is responsible for all of the Category B.2 instruction and for all of the pre-baccalaureate instruction of students who do not receive high enough scores on the Entry Level Mathematics (ELM) examination to be placed in baccalaureate-level math courses. The department has not appreciably altered its practices in teaching the B.2 courses because it already had sufficient sections of the courses, staff to teach those sections, and
prerequisites governing enrollment in the courses. Table 1 reveals a striking difference between mathematics instruction and instruction in the other Foundation disciplines; every semester about half of the tenured/tenure-track faculty in mathematics are involved in teaching the Foundation courses.

The department has had a larger presence in student advising and registration in the past two years and has begun to track enrollment in its courses. The demand for sections, however, continues to grow, especially for first-year students, so the department is having to adjust its course offerings in an attempt to meet these needs. The number of sections of general education courses has risen steadily, nearly doubling since Fall 1996 (Figure 2). In that period, the number of sections of pre-baccalaureate mathematics has stabilized and in fact begun to decline.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trends in Mathematics Sections</th>
<th>Fall Semester</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of Sections</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pre-bacc. Math</td>
<td>GE Math</td>
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<tr>
<td>F94</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>F95</td>
<td>40</td>
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<td>F99</td>
<td>120</td>
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<td>F00</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2

3. Expectations in Faculty Hiring

Even if current staffing patterns do not reflect participation by significant numbers of tenured and tenure-track faculty in Foundation courses, departments are nevertheless paying attention to their general education responsibilities in planning for and recruiting new faculty. In the College of Liberal Arts, where all Foundation courses except in mathematics are taught, the dean requires that departmental requests for tenure-track faculty authorizations include information about how the proposed appointment will address the college mission of supporting the general education program. Not all departments in the college have yet begun to address this issue, but there are numerous examples of departmental hiring plans that cite the University priority attached to general education. Specific examples follow.

Anthropology: “Our tenure-track request will help us to plug a major hole that affects both general education and the major. We expect the new hire to begin teaching Anthropology 120 [Introduction to Cultural Anthropology, which fulfills Category D.2.b, Social and Behavioral Sciences] in the Fall 2001 semester, and to work . . . on coordinating Anthropology 120 with the intention of taking on the full responsibility of this job.”

Asian and Asian-American Studies: “Our tenure-track position request is consistent with the collegiate and university-wide priorities for the twenty-first century, viz., General Education, strengthening majors, local community needs, multicultural curriculum, and teacher preparation.” Chicano and Latino Studies: “Our tenure-track request would help us to update the content of CHLS 150 [Introduction to Chicano Literary Studies, which fulfills Category C.2.a, Literature] and to develop new capstone courses for general education.”

Political Science: “Both hires in Public Law and Comparative Politics will share in teaching POSC 100, American Political Institutions, a Title 5 state requirement. Along with teaching a lower division course in their respective fields for [General Education Category] D.2 [Social and Behavioral Sciences], both hires will play central roles in creating pathways, a significant compo-
nent of the new General Education policy, Laws and Society and Global Politics and Policymaking.”

Psychology: “These positions respond to several College priorities. The teaching emphasis on introductory psychology and critical thinking in this position description supports the emphasis on general education with particular emphasis on the foundational skill of critical thinking.”

Religious Studies: “Of the planning priorities identified by the College of Liberal Arts, our proposed position in Islam seems particularly relevant to a) general education: Religious Studies is a ‘service’ department, and our undergraduate courses will be offered for GE credit.”

Romance, German, and Russian Languages and Literatures: “The language courses constitute one important component of the General Education Distribution requirements. The department wishes to strengthen the students’ General Education experience through foreign language teaching and learning. We are also concerned about providing technology-mediated instruction to improve the students’ performance through supplementary activities accessed from the home or the workplace.”

Since the bulk of General Education courses are taught by departments in the College of Liberal Arts, this initiative is timely and appropriate. The Department of Mathematics, which is the only department outside the College of Liberal Arts to bear responsibility for Foundation courses, will also need to incorporate the mission of general education into its planning for “the faculty of the future.” It should be noted, however, that even without this explicit attention in hiring, the Department of Mathematics assigns significant numbers of tenured and tenure-track faculty members to general education courses. In Fall 1999 and Spring 2000, an average of 13 of the 24.5 permanent full-time faculty members in the department taught Foundation courses.

Above the Foundation level, the pattern of participation by tenured and tenure-track faculty members in general education courses is different from the one described above. Tenure-track position announcements frequently include teaching in general education courses among the expected duties. Nevertheless, it would be consistent with the University’s commitment to a revitalized general education program to encourage departments to deploy increasing percentages of tenured and tenure-track faculty in Foundation and lower-division Explorations courses, as well as in other levels of the program. This may need to be one of the goals of the General Education Implementation Coordinator over the next few years, with support from senior administrators.

4. Recommendations and Remaining Challenges

- Monitor and assess the sufficiency and nature of faculty staffing resources in departments with heavy general education responsibilities, including the balance between temporary and permanent faculty.
- Encourage departments to deploy larger numbers of permanent faculty in the General Education program.
D. Student Issues in General Education Reform

Can the University deliver Foundation and other general education courses over the short and long term in sufficient supply to accommodate our students? How do the challenges of remediation affect the implementation of general education reform?

1. Managing the Challenge of Remediation

Reducing the need for remediation has become an important goal of the California State University system. In February 1997, the CSU Chancellor issued Executive Order (E.O.) 665, which had important implications for students entering the CSU who were not considered “college ready” in English and mathematics. Specifically, E.O. 665 requires that students who plan to enroll in the CSU, but who do not meet certain criteria for exemption, take the English and mathematics placement tests (EPT and ELM, respectively) prior to enrollment. Shortly thereafter, the CSU Board of Trustees slightly modified the E.O. 665 exemption criteria and added a one-year timeline within which students must make up any English or mathematics deficiencies or face potential disenrollment. The latest exemption criteria for English and mathematics placement tests are shown in Table 2.

E.O. 665 specifies that non-exempt students take the EPT for English and the ELM test for mathematics prior to enrollment. These are system-wide tests that may be taken on any CSU campus. The EPT is scaled from 120 to 180, with a passing score set at 151. The ELM is scaled from 100 to 700, with a passing score set at 550.

Of the four Foundation areas, two (English composition and mathematics) require appropriate placement scores as a prerequisite to enrollment. Students with acceptable scores on the EPT or the ELM are permitted to enroll in college-level courses in those subjects. Students with high scores on the alternative tests listed in Table 2 can also enroll in baccalaureate courses. Those students who do not achieve a passing score on the EPT or the ELM are required to pass a pre-baccalaureate course in the area of deficiency before moving on to the Foundation course. Students with especially low ELM scores are required to complete two pre-baccalaureate courses. Likewise, students with low EPT scores who are non-native English speakers are encouraged to enroll in a 2-semester remedial composition sequence designed especially for students learning English as a second language. Thus, the ability of students to complete the Foundation in a timely fashion is directly related to

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: Placement Examination Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>English placement test exemptions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 550 or above on the SAT I verbal section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 680 or above on the SAT II writing test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 24 or above on the ACT English test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Score of 3 or above on the AP language or literature &amp; composition exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion and transfer of an appropriate college course in English composition with a grade of C or better</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
their readiness for college-level course work in English and mathematics.

Because students are only required to take these tests at some time prior to matriculation, ELM and EPT test scores are not always available at the time of freshman orientation and registration. To simplify placement, prior to Fall 2001 the University has used SAT score cutoffs in mathematics and English that are below the official exemption level for placement purposes. Moreover, students were permitted to use the highest placement when both sets of scores were available. The University became concerned that this standard needed to be raised and, beginning in Fall 2001, enforced a policy whereby ELM and/or EPT scores took precedence over SAT scores. This change in practice has significantly reduced the number of students allowed to enroll in baccalaureate English and mathematics in their first semester, thus having an impact on the general education courses taken by these students.

In Fall 1999, when CSULB began implementation of its new general education program, 3,482 students enrolled as first-time freshmen. To ensure compliance with the mandate in E.O. 665 that non-exempt students take the placement tests prior to enrollment, the Offices of Enrollment Services and Testing and Evaluation Services put together a plan to inform students of the requirement. Non-exempt students who applied to CSULB were sent numerous letters throughout the spring reminding them of the test requirements and dates. Students who had not tested in time for the summer Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration Program completed contractual agreements with Testing and Evaluation Services to take the tests before fall classes began. The plan was successful in that nearly all students complied.

Of the 3,309 first-time freshmen (excluding specially admitted students) who enrolled in Fall 1999, 2,278 or 69 percent needed remediation in English, mathematics, or both. The second major component of E.O. 665 requires that these students become fully proficient (i.e., college-ready) in both English and mathematics within one year. The Office of Enrollment Services is charged with completing and submitting a report to the Office of the Chancellor regarding compliance with this one-year timeline. Of the 2,278 students in the 1999 freshman cohort needing remediation, 1,807 or 79 percent were fully proficient in English and mathematics at the end of one year. Of the 471 who were not fully proficient at the end of one year, 145 were permitted to re-enroll under contractual arrangements, while 132 were not allowed to re-enroll. The remaining 194 students left the institution voluntarily. Restated another way, of the 3,309 regularly admitted first-time freshmen who enrolled in the Fall 1999, 2,655 re-enrolled in the Fall 2000. Of these 2,655 students, 2,510 or 95 percent were fully proficient (i.e., college ready) by the Fall 2000.

Serious efforts are underway to help students become fully proficient before they enroll at a CSU campus. In the 1999–2000 academic year, CSULB was awarded a $900,000 grant by the Chancellor’s Office for the purpose of working with high school juniors and seniors in need of pre-college English and mathematics skills. This program has become known as the High School Outreach and Academic Preparation Program (HSOAP). Faculty from CSULB and six area high schools designed the program and collectively planned the forms of intervention. High school students were pre-tested in English and mathematics. Those who participated in intervention activities were then post-tested. The post-test gains were significant in both English and mathematics, with students demonstrating skill development while not necessarily achieving passing scores.
that would enable them to be considered fully college-ready. HSOAP is now in its third year of implementation.

2. Advising for General Education

To prepare students for general education, CSULB has invested considerable effort to improve its advising procedures during the Student Orientation, Advising, and Registration Program, as described in Section A.2. Prior to implementing the new general education program, CSULB had established a policy requiring all freshmen to attend either the SOAR program or the small-group sessions conducted by the Academic Advising Center before they can register for their first semester. Ninety percent or more of the entering freshmen choose to go through the SOAR program. In addition, during their first semester at CSULB, students must participate in advising for the spring semester conducted by the Academic Advising Center, Educational Opportunity Program, University Honors Program, Learning Alliance, or the Center for Student-Athlete Services. The Academic Advising Center, which provides the bulk of mandatory advising, has developed its own effective workshops (described in section II, above) and also briefly other campus advising units on the expectations for mandatory advising. New advising forms have been constructed to assist students in selecting appropriate general education and major courses throughout their four-year tenure at CSULB.

In 1999, in preparation for the first class under the new rules, the General Education Implementation Coordinator met with many different constituencies—EOP advisors, the staffs of the Academic Advising Center, Center for Student Athlete Services, and Intensive Learning Experience (which coordinates remedial courses), the Academic Advising Council, the staff of Student Access to Science, the First-Year Experience Committee, etc.—to answer questions and help develop strategies for explaining the new program to students. The Coordinator also provided a training session on the new policy for SOAR advisors, who had the difficult challenge of explaining one set of rules to first-time freshmen and another set to transferring students, who follow the previous general education pattern.

In Fall 2000 and subsequent semesters, transferring students have been assigned catalog rights for general education based on requirements previously in place. In Fall 2000 a small number of transfer students, mainly students from out of state or those who had not maintained continuous attendance at a California community college, were placed under the 1999 general education pattern, with the vast majority retaining catalog rights to the previous general education program. The Fall 2001 class features a larger number of transfer students under the new rules, including students who began work at California community colleges in 1999. Two important changes in admission policy will ease the transition for these students. First, the University no longer accepts lower division transfer students. Second, all transfer students must have completed courses in the four Foundation areas with grades of “C” or better, placing them on an even footing with our continuing students.

A major concern in planning for implementation has been the training of the cadre of advisors who will work with students at SOAR and subsequently at mandatory advising. The SOAR advisors are students themselves, many of them enrolled in the master’s program in Student Development in Higher Education. Although they are in training to become student service professionals, they typically have not had significant previous experience as advisors, and the time available for training is limited to a two-week period at the beginning of the summer.
In the first year of implementation, in addition to learning the nuances of a wide variety of University policies extending well beyond general education, SOAR advisors had to cope with a continually changing landscape of shortages of seats in particular courses as the University struggled to keep up with a one-year increase of almost 25 percent in the size of the freshman class. As problems were identified throughout the summer, the SOAR staff made adjustments to compensate. Nevertheless, concern was later expressed by the Academic Advising Center about the large number of program changes requested by entering students between the end of SOAR and the start of classes.

In preparation for the second year of implementation, the professional advising staff identified several issues related to SOAR advisor training as needing improvement. A working group including advisors from the Academic Advising Center, Learning Alliance, Center for Student Athlete Services, and Intensive Learning Experience (ILE), plus the General Education Coordinator and a SOAR representative, redesigned and reorganized the training manual and tried to devise ways to provide stronger guidance to the SOAR advisors. While the strategies taught to advisors were essentially the same as the previous year, there was a greater focus on issues related to working with new students, and the structure of the SOAR workshops themselves was altered so as to place those SOAR advisors with prior experience directly in sessions working with students rather than in supervisory roles. The Beach Beginnings program described in Section B.2 served to simplify advising in the first several weeks of SOAR, since students electing to take a Beach Beginnings “package” began building a schedule with two classes already selected. A final important change was to set up a checkpoint at SOAR, staffed by the Assistant Director of SOAR and a representative from the Academic Advising Center, Learning Alliance, Center for Student Athlete Services, or ILE, to review the schedules of every student before they were allowed to register. The consequence of this intervention was a much smaller demand for program changes than in the previous year, with the majority of those changes coming not from incorrect placement but from routine issues such as the need to take classes at different times.

3. Meeting Student Needs

The new general education program was implemented for the freshman class of 1999, coinciding with a period of extremely rapid growth in the freshman class, which expanded from about 2500 students in 1997 to 2800 in 1998 and almost 3500 in 1999. Following a respite in 2000, which saw a freshman class of about 3400, growth resumed with a vengeance; the 2001 freshman class is approximately 4500. The twin demands of growth and the restructuring of the general education curriculum have produced unique challenges for the University.

A key aspect of the new general education policy is the requirement that students complete Foundation courses within their first 36 baccalaureate units. Unit credit awarded for Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate exams, college course work completed while still in high school, and pre-baccalaureate courses in English and mathematics taken to meet University requirements are not counted against this limit. The maximum load permitted for first-time freshmen without special permission is 17 units; in subsequent semesters, students are permitted to take up to 18 units without special permission. In other words, all students would normally have at least three semesters in which to complete the 13-unit Foundation requirement, and students needing to complete extensive pre-baccalaureate education.

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\(^{3}\) Growth in the freshman class has continued, reaching 4500 in Fall 2001.
Because implementation of the new program coincided with a dramatic upsurge in the number of freshmen, the capacity of the Foundation departments has been sorely tested, as described in section C. The leading concern for all Foundation departments is to offer enough sections to meet the demands of the new program, while also insuring consistency in instruction, given the high turnover rate in instructors. A second, related concern is to find enough classroom space to offer these sections, because the University is quickly approaching its physical plant capacity. There have been instances where departments have had sufficient funds to add sections to the schedule but have been unable to identify classrooms or qualified instructors.

Another consequence of the implementation of the Foundation stage is that students who lack proficiency in both writing and mathematics have a much more limited selection of courses open to them. For these students (approximately 25 percent of the 1999 entering class) who were required to complete remedial work in both mathematics and English, these requirements accounted for half or more of their first semester schedule. The only Foundation course (other than University 100) open to these students is the Category A.2 oral communication course. In both 1999 and 2000, it was not possible to guarantee that all students who had been placed in pre-baccalaureate English and mathematics would also be able to take an oral communication course; there were simply not enough available seats. As an alternate strategy, some students were enrolled in appropriate remediation courses plus courses outside the general education program, such as certain major requirements, program orientations, and activity courses, to reach a full schedule. Another relatively small group was placed in a schedule that combined required pre-baccalaureate courses plus courses from a limited list of general education areas, such as the fine arts, that experience had shown were less dependent upon English composition or mathematics skills. However, especially in the Fall 1999, the oral communication classes had an unusually large percentage of students who were not proficient in writing and mathematics. Instructors in oral communication were thus presented with an unanticipated challenge.

In Fall 2000, the pressure on oral communication courses was slightly less intense; prior to the first SOAR session there were more than 1100 seats remaining, compared to about 900 the previous year, and the eventual size of the freshman class was more than 100 students smaller. Nevertheless, the freshman population in oral communication classes was less academically prepared on average than the freshmen in Foundation English and mathematics. (It should be noted that, in each year, about half the seats in oral communication sections were filled by continuing students.)

In 1999, 2000, and 2001, all Foundation classes filled completely by the end of the summer SOAR sessions except in the area of critical thinking, which is typically only taken by freshmen with Advanced Placement in English or strong verbal SAT scores. There was an encouraging sign in the Spring 2001, however, when all Foundation categories had from 280 to 500 seats remaining after all continuing students, including freshmen who entered in Fall 2000, had an opportunity to register. This development suggests that the campus can meet the demand for these classes with an entering class of 3500. Unfortunately, we cannot provide sufficient space for all of the 4500 freshmen who entered in Fall 2001 to enroll promptly in the necessary classes. The dramatic upsurge in the number of freshmen in 2001 will once again create strong
demand for all Foundation classes in Spring 2002. Nevertheless, our experience in 2000-2001 suggests that, assuming that efforts to stabilize the size of the entering class are successful, the campus is reaching the point where it will be possible to meet the demand for these courses.

A necessary consequence of directing students toward one set of courses, in this case Foundation courses, is redirection away from other courses, particularly other 100- and 200-level general education courses. In Fall 1999, the 700-student increase in the size of the freshman class more than made up for potential losses in enrollment in the 100-level non-Foundation courses. In addition, advisors working with entering freshmen encourage them to enroll in a balanced schedule, with one or two Foundation courses plus a selection of Explorations courses. Thus, enrollments in 100-level Explorations courses have collectively remained strong. At the 200-level, most courses have seen fairly stable enrollments, with the exception of those courses that changed numbers from the 100- to the 200-level, where there has been some decline. Conversely, courses that were renumbered from the 200- to the 100-level have fared quite well. It is probably too early to gauge accurately the long-term stability of enrollments at these levels. Similarly, it is also too soon to estimate with precision the effects of the change in policy from requiring two Interdisciplinary courses plus an additional upper-division general education course to requiring three Capstone courses, since the students now enrolled in these courses are almost entirely covered by the previous general education rules. However, an analysis of enrollments in several 300-level Explorations courses in Psychology, History, and Philosophy indicates that a substantial fraction (on average, more than 80 percent) of the students were not using the course solely to meet the upper-division general education requirement. As the Pathway component develops, inclusion of a particular course on a popular Pathway may have a significant impact on its future enrollment.

4. Recommendations and Remaining Challenges

- Assess the effectiveness of the SOAR Program with respect to advising of students taking general education courses.
- Support efforts to reduce the need for remediation in mathematics and English composition and to move students through the required remediation in a timely fashion.
- Monitor course scheduling and continue efforts to reduce the backlog in demand for general education courses, especially in Foundation courses.

E. Outcomes

*What effect will the new requirements have on student success in terms of measurable advancement of skills, retention, and progress to degree?*

1. Findings to Date

The Fall 2001 semester marked the third year of a four-year phase-in of the revitalized general education program—the freshman class of 1999—generally finished the Foundation course sequence during the 2000-2001 academic year and has started the Explorations sequence. Because the new policy is still in the process of being implemented, and will
be at least until the end of the 2002–2003 academic year, evaluating its effectiveness is difficult, particularly with respect to skills students might attain. Yet, if one takes into consideration the energy and resources being directed toward making general education a meaningful experience for students, then CSULB is well on its way to creating an influential, skills-based program. This section summarizes the range of assessments being developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the GE program, both during continued implementation and in the near future.

**Baseline information.** At SOAR, all freshmen complete the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) freshman survey questionnaire. Over 700 institutions of higher education nationwide participate in the CIRP. Institutional and normative data are processed and distributed by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). The survey collects baseline demographic data on entering students, exploring such topics as their aspirations, academic backgrounds, study habits, personal beliefs, leisure activities, and anticipated college activities. As such, it provides a largely unexploited source of information on the entering characteristics of CSULB freshmen.

The Introduction to this section described a survey of student attitudes and experiences in general education, conducted in 1997. This offers an important source of baseline data on student attitudes. The University also has extensive data on the preparation of incoming students in mathematics and English. It is likely that the freshman profile will change with the implementation of restrictions on the size of the freshman class in Fall 2002; nonetheless, such data should be useful in making comparisons of student gains over time.

In the summer of 2001, the University sent a 6-member team to the AAHE Summer Academy in Breckenridge, Colorado. The team consisted of the General Education and Assessment Coordinators, the Chair of the Assessment Committee, the Associate Vice President for Academic Personnel and Assessment, and two faculty members from departments (History and Mathematics) with major responsibilities in the general education program. The team’s goal was to design a process for the full development and implementation of general education reform -- the "next steps" in our ongoing journey. Among the priorities for the 2001-2002 academic year is to identify specific programmatic outcomes for which we will gather baseline data and develop outcomes measures, beginning in the spring.

**Advising.** The effectiveness of academic advising efforts largely remains to be assessed. The Academic Advising Center administers a survey to nearly all entering freshmen each year. The survey results, which mainly address such issues as student study habits and familiarity with campus resources, are fairly consistent over several years. As previously discussed, the survey does not explicitly ask students about general education goals or skills but, as an established data collection tool, with some modification it clearly offers an assessment opportunity.

**Student performance.** Freshman probation rates have declined steadily since the mid-1990’s, independently of changes to general education. In Fall 1999 the probation rates for first time freshmen were 13.6 percent among regularly admitted students and 13.9 percent overall. In Fall 2000 the rates were 14.0 percent among regularly admitted students and 14.6 percent overall. This period was also marked by an increase in the academic preparation of entering students as well as an aggressive effort to place students in English and mathematics courses based on the results of placement exams. Thus it will be difficult to segregate the value-added effects of general education reform. First-year retention rates have also improved steadily.
during the period in question. First-year retention was actually slightly lower (at 81 percent) for the Fall 1999 cohort than for the previous year, when approximately 83 percent of entering students were retained. Once again, however, the new general education program was only one of several environmental factors involved; others included the increasingly stringent policy on remediation and the pressures caused by burgeoning enrollment. Failure to complete remediation in a timely way was clearly a negative factor in the short run. Data presented in section D.1, above, indicate that students who were classified as fully proficient in English and mathematics after one year were retained at an 88-percent rate.

Additional measures that may be influenced by general education reform (as well as other factors) include average student performance on the Writing Proficiency Examination and the rates of graduation and long-term retention. Both of these measures are clearly somewhat blunt tools. The recently established Committee on Retention and Graduation Rates, while working with official retention data, has initiated an inventory of campus efforts (at all levels, down to departments and programs) to improve retention and graduation rates, and has requested that programs share data they have collected on program efficacy. Hopefully these data will provide additional texture to accompany the overall numbers.

To get a clearer picture of whether the new general education program is meeting its goals, the University will need to develop further assessment measures. This will be a priority in the next two years, supported as possible by relevant faculty development programs. In support of this priority, recommendations from the Breckenridge group included training a group of faculty trainers on a model of developing learning-centered, outcomes-based courses with embedded assessments; the trainers would then offer training to much larger groups of faculty. Dr. Peggy Maki, the Director of Assessment for AAHE, has agreed to come to campus in early Spring 2002 to offer two days of faculty training in this area. As a prelude to her visit, the General Education Winter Institute will adopt a new format for January 2002. Instead of the traditional workshops on teaching strategies, the Institute will bring faculty together to draft statements of objectives and outcomes in the general education breadth (Explorations) areas.

Other activities underway are associated with the Enhancing Educational Effectiveness Awards Program (formerly the Educational Innovations Awards). A new faculty support component was added to the program this year. Awardees will be required to participate in a workshop/seminar during the spring semester that will support their efforts to create learning-centered, outcomes-based courses. The call for proposals identified general education courses as well as the development of assessments across courses for Foundation skills as program priorities. A final proposal from the Breckenridge team, which does not yet have a timeline, was to support the formation of teaching circles of faculty offering Capstone courses. Through these circles, Capstone instructors could begin to share and compare assignments and approaches, with the goal of developing common standards across departments.

Evidence of the value of faculty collaborations of this sort is accumulating, although most such groups operate within departments. For example, the Chair of the Department of Communication Studies noted, “The new GE program ...has led, probably naturally, to all faculty sharing their own best practices in the classroom. We now have ‘activity workbooks’ for all faculty in [Foundation oral communication courses].” The Department of Political Science not only created a standards-based course outline for POSC 100 (required of all students), but
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redesigned all of its advanced general education courses along the same lines. The University offers 11 foreign languages through 5 departments for general education credit; nonetheless, an examination of the standard course outlines for these courses reveals a common set of objectives and approaches across all languages.

Course and Curriculum Assessment. In constructing guidelines for course review, the GEGC established a requirement for follow-up assessment of courses on a five-year cycle. Course developers are given the responsibility for evaluating the extent to which the course objectives identified in the initial approval process have been met. While the rudiments of the process have been announced to the faculty, a major task for the GEGC will be working out a practical method for carrying out a large number of course assessments in a way that maintains the integrity of the curriculum. The GEGC is also charged with periodically evaluating the overall program. The mechanism for this evaluation has not been set up, but must be given attention in the near future. A number of the activities described above will support this process.

2. Recommendations and Remaining Challenges

- Develop a comprehensive ongoing assessment plan for the General Education program, focused on a review of the overall program goals and an evaluation of the extent to which the program goals are being met in practice.

- Assess the student learning outcomes of the General Education program. The University will need to develop further assessments. This will be a priority in the next two years, supported as possible by relevant faculty development programs.

F. Managing General Education Reform

What structures have been established for management and implementation of the General Education program?

1. Structure for Coordination and Management

The structure for coordination and management of the general education program at CSULB has historically been quite decentralized. By contrast, the governance system has resided mainly in two committees—the General Education Governing Committee (GEGC), with primary responsibility for review of individual courses, and the Planning and Educational Policies (PEP) Council, with primary responsibility for policy development. The roles of these committees in developing the new policy and thereby implementing curricular change were described earlier. Neither committee, with a crowded calendar and a rotating group of faculty members, is appropriate as a choice for management responsibilities. At the time the PEP Council approved the general education policy, it also forwarded several recommendations for implementation that included a call for the appointment of a General Education Coordinator.4

4In May 2001, the Academic Senate restructured the Planning and Educational Policies Council (PEP) by moving two of its charges (program review and academic planning) to a new council called the Program Review and Academic Planning Council. The PEP Council then became the Educational Policy Council (EP) while retaining its responsibility for General Education policy development.
After consultation with faculty leadership, the Provost in Fall 1998 appointed a General Education Implementation Coordinator. This individual receives 6 units of assigned time (equivalent to a 50-percent assignment) and an office budget to work with various constituencies on general education implementation issues. With the focus on implementation, the issues to be addressed have changed from year to year. In the pre-implementation year the major tasks involved informing the faculty about the program, working with the GEGC and other faculty to develop criteria and guidelines for reviewing courses, consulting with the Office of Enrollment Services to interpret the policy and to update the Catalog and Schedule of Classes, and meeting with advisors to develop advising strategies. Subsequently, the focus has shifted to expanding faculty development activities (such as GESI and GEWI), working with the GEGC on review of courses, assisting faculty with course proposal development, and responding to a variety of requests for information. Throughout, the Coordinator has been collecting data on enrollment patterns, student success, and other issues. In the future, the focus will likely shift again to encompass the areas of general education that are less well developed, such as the Pathway system and the Capstone.

As a faculty member with no administrative authority, the Coordinator’s role has been one of facilitator rather than manager. There are, however, a number of management responsibilities attached to the maintenance of the general education program. The colleges and departments manage course scheduling, with resource allocations negotiated between the Office of Academic Affairs and the colleges. Units within the Office of Enrollment Services evaluate students for completion of general education requirements and prepare the information in the Schedule of Classes. The Academic Advising Center is the main advising unit that provides general education information to students and coordinates the mandatory advising program. The Academic Senate Office provides clerical support for the GEGC. Finally, administrative authority for the general education program resides with the Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs—Instructional Programs and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies.

While there are arguably at least two more years of hard work still ahead and a number of aspects of the program need further development, the immediate challenge of implementation is gradually being replaced by the longer-term needs of coordination and management. These ongoing needs will include the dissemination of information, the provision of support for curriculum development, work with the faculty governance process, monitoring of the availability of courses and of compliance with the course criteria, and maintenance of communication with various campus units, especially across divisions. As the campus moves from implementation to maintenance and evaluation, it is appropriate to revisit the question of the best structure for coordination and management.

2. Enforcement of General Education Policy

Prior to the Fall 1999 semester, the graduation evaluation unit within the Office of Enrollment Services modified the degree audit program for those students subject to the 1999 general education policy, with the result that those students will be held to the various provisions of the policy as graduation requirements. It is, however, a much more difficult problem to enforce the various prerequisite requirements using the current student information system. Similarly, because of the complex programming required to evaluate student progress in completing the Foundation, students are not monitored for compliance within the first 36 college units. Nor does the general education policy specify the consequences of not completing the Foundation within that time.
frame. Since the first two years of implementation have been accompanied by shortages of seats, especially in oral communication sections, even if it were possible to enforce the completion policy aggressively, the campus would almost certainly not take a punitive approach toward students who had made an effort to comply and were otherwise in good standing. Individual faculty members, however, have the option of excluding students who have not met the stated prerequisites for 200-level and higher general education courses.

A concern of advisors is the provision of consistent information to students concerning the rules for completing the Foundation, including the consequences for failing to do so. This topic has been discussed on a number of occasions in such venues as the Academic Advising Council and the First-Year Experience group, and is part of SOAR training. A set of guidelines for the 36-unit rule was developed and distributed by the General Education Implementation Coordinator. Unfortunately, it is clear from advisor and student comments that the issue still needs attention.

A sample of approximately 200 records of students who entered in Fall 1999 was examined in Fall 2000 for the purpose of determining what progress the students were making in completing the Foundation requirements. In this sample, which consisted of students enrolled in either general education composition, general education mathematics, or pre-baccalaureate composition in Fall 1999, approximately 85 percent of the students still in attendance at CSULB had either completed the Foundation, would complete it in Fall 2000 by maintaining satisfactory grades, or would not reach 36 baccalaureate units in Fall 2000 and thus had at least one more semester to complete the requirements.

The University has begun the process of replacing its administrative software systems with products developed by PeopleSoft. The new student information system is expected to be operational in several years, but its feature package has not yet been determined. There is some hope that the new system will be better designed to accommodate complex requirements such as the provisions related to the Foundation. By the time the new system is fully implemented, the University’s enrollment should also have stabilized, so the backlog in demand for Foundation courses should have been eliminated. At that point the University will have to determine what steps to take to make sure that all students complete the general education program in the appropriate sequence.

3. Recommendations and Remaining Challenges

- Develop a plan for the coordination and management of general education, including further definition of the roles and responsibilities of the Coordinator and academic administrators.
- Develop ways to track student progress, including timely progress toward completion of general education requirements in the new student information system.