

# Memo

Date: May 2, 2007  
To: Dr. Sharon H. Nelson, Associate Dean  
From: Jung-Soo Yi, Curriculum Committee Chair  
Subject: GE Area VI Discussion on April 30, 2007

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The purpose of the Area VI requirement is to strengthen the general education of students before and/or while they pursue their major programs. To explore the effectiveness of the Area VI requirement, the COLA Curriculum Committee reviewed five courses for winter 2007, discussing the number of students completing the exam and the number of "adequate" responses to the questions.

During Winter Quarter, 2007, COLA offered five courses from Area VI: AFS 200, ATH 242, CLS 260, SW 272-01, and SW 272-02. The goal for Area VI is for 100% "adequate" response to the questions with 80% still considered acceptable. With minor variations among courses, four courses were reported to attain acceptable scores (AFS 200; 95%; CLS 260; 83%; SW 272-01; 98% and SW 272-02; 100%) and an average response rate below 80% was reported for one course (ATH 242; 60%). Comparable to the fall 2006 report, ATH 242 continued to reflect less than an 80% adequate response rate. With a majority of courses reaching the desirable benchmark, the committee found these to be acceptable. Based on the reported results for ATH 242, however, it is recommended that this class be carefully monitored by the instructors and the CoLA Curriculum Committee to determine if adjustments need to be considered.

After reviewing tabulated data regarding "adequate" responses, the committee also concluded the following:

1. Instructors did not share a common understanding of either what constituted an "adequate" response or what percentages needed to be reported.
2. The "marker question" method of ascertaining whether students are meeting Area VI goals is fatally flawed insofar as it presupposes that a standardized, quantitative system can measure the degree to which students have mastered complex reasoning and communication skills, which the committee agreed is an erroneous supposition.

In light of these findings, the committee agreed that next year's CoLA Curriculum Committee should work with UGEC toward the following ends:

1. ensuring that all faculty better understand the nature and goals of general education;
2. devising a system whereby instructors teaching Area VI courses in CoLA can share a more common understanding of Area VI goals and how best to meet them, both as individual teachers and as a collective faculty. The committee discussed some initial, tentative ideas about how to approach such goals, including the possibility of regular meetings at several levels, from groups of instructors who teach the same Area VI course to groups of faculty who teach different Area VI courses in CoLA.