




To: University Community

From: Michael W. Quick, Executive Vice Provost 

Date: 26 January 2012

RE: Examination of the USC General Education Program

For the past decade-and-a-half, the General Education (GE) Program has been the centerpiece of undergraduate core curriculum at USC. It has been a model that has served our undergraduates well, and when established, it was recognized nationally as a program at the forefront of liberal arts study. However, as Provost Elizabeth Garrett has noted in various academic contexts, we must regularly examine our practices as we always aim toward excellence in all realms, ensuring that USC is a leader in higher education for the 21st Century. At her request, I will commence an examination of our GE Program beginning in spring 2012. The goal of this examination will be to ensure that our GE Program provides the foundational, liberal arts educational experience worthy of our undergraduates and reflects the values and aspirations of the University.

Several reasons make this an auspicious time to evaluate and make appropriate changes to our core curriculum. First, it could be convincingly argued that in no other 15 year span has USC changed so significantly, and in no place is this reflected more than in the academic quality, intellectual curiosity and diverse backgrounds of our undergraduate students. Second, the Board of Trustees of the University has just approved the new strategic vision that will guide USC for the years to come; it was the product of more than two years of discussions throughout our academic community. The vision encourages the USC community to create bold, transformative educational experiences for all of our students, and to structure effective ways “to foster curiosity, imagination and creativity” in our undergraduates. Third, the University was recently evaluated for reaccreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The WASC report clearly recognized the excellent education that USC provides our students and acknowledged the rapid ascent of the university since the last peer review; accordingly, the evaluation resulted in a full ten year accreditation. However, WASC did suggest that USC should take a hard look at its GE Program, with specific attention to its breadth of course offerings, whether the current structure and content of courses were appropriate, the role of GE in capstone experiences, and methods of assessment to ensure that our GE Program is rigorous.

Professor Gene Bickers, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs, and I will lead the committee to examine the GE Program, and make recommendations to the Provost regarding changes that will make our GE Program the vibrant core for undergraduate learning at USC. The list of committee members accompanies this memorandum.

Several principles will guide the work of the committee. First, all options for GE will be considered as long as they are intellectually rigorous. Second, procedures will be enacted to

ensure that all stakeholders have opportunities to provide input to the committee regarding strengths and weaknesses of the current program and to suggest changes that would improve our core curriculum. It is anticipated that the Committee will provide a final report to the Provost no later than October 1, 2012.

I look forward to working with the entire USC community as we undertake this important task.

Cc: Elizabeth Garrett, Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
Howard Gillman, Dean, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Examination of the USC General Education Program – Committee Members

Michael W. Quick, Executive Vice Provost

Gene Bickers, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Programs

Emily Anderson, Associate Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Sarah Banet-Weiser, Professor, Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism

William Berelson, Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Sharon Carnicke, Professor, School of Theater

Travis Glynn, BA anticipated, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Macarena Gómez-Barris, Associate Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Sarah Gualtieri, Associate Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Sherman Jackson, Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Priya Jaikumar, Associate Professor, School of Cinematic Arts

Michael Khoo, Professor, Viterbi School of Engineering

Andrei Marmor, Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences and Gould School of Law

Geoffrey Middlebrook, Associate Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

David Mittelstein, BS anticipated, Viterbi School of Engineering

John Monterosso, Associate Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Nandini Rajagopalan, Professor, Marshall School of Business

Antonia Szabari, Associate Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Kevin van Bladel, Associate Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences

Nicholas Warner, Professor, Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences