The General Education Council passed the following motion at its 26 March 2007 meeting:

The General Education Council proposes that the Intellectual Issues requirement be reduced to one three-credit course that must be taken outside a student’s first major. Students whose first major is interdisciplinary must take a course with a prefix other than that major.

Rationale

Let us begin with the painfully obvious: the reduction in the intellectual issues requirement from two courses to one course will help us be better positioned to deliver our general education program. This semester’s enrollments in intellectual issues tell a sobering tale of the difficulty we have in offering the seats necessary to meet the need in the category. We have fifty intellectual issues courses this term overenrolled by 82 students. One should bear in mind that this is after chairs and departments worked hard to add seats in the category for the semester. This semester is representative of the situation faced by students, advisors, and faculty teaching intellectual issues courses semester after semester.

In spring 2001 the university reduced the requirement in the intellectual issues category from nine hours to six hours. The General Education Board at that time let departments and programs know that additional courses were needed to ensure the vitality of the requirement. New courses were created in response, 24 since spring 2001, but the additional seats generated have not been enough.

The obvious which is painful should not, however, cause us to lose sight of how obviously important the intellectual issues requirement is to SUNY/Oswego’s general education program, our students, and the institution as a whole. The requirement is one of two local requirements, tolerance and intolerance in the United States being the other, and our Mission Summary II document rightly notes that the intellectual issues requirement is one of the “distinctive elements” of our general education program. The College of Arts and Sciences mission statement holds that “Through in-depth study and general education in the arts and sciences, we prepare students to address complex problems, communicate ideas, and approach the world with a curious and critical spirit.” The College’s vision statement adds that “making connections among disciplines and between academic study and practice” is central to our intellectual community. The rationale for General Education 1998, which underpins intellectual issues insofar as the requirement was born with GE 98, highlights the connections between disciplines even as it connects general education at Oswego to prevailing nationwide trends in higher education that have remained, by and large, constant. The rationale stresses that students should be able to “integrate ideas from across disciplines to illuminate interdisciplinary themes, issues, or social problems.” What was true in 1998 remains true today. Thus, the intellectual issues requirement is vital to the mission of the University.