November 6, 2008

To: Professor David Redlawsk, Chair of the Faculty Assembly

From: Helena Dettmer, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum

RE: Proposal to Restructure the CLAS General Education Program

1. Summary of the Proposal

The University of Iowa reaccreditation report of 2007 praised the CLAS General Education Program but urged the College to consider "new organizational structures and names for the General Education" categories, especially for the confusing "Distributed General Education" requirement. The report called for an integration and clarification of the GE requirements without any essential changes to the current General Education Program (GEP).

Over the last eighteen months, three committees have worked to carry out this charge: the ad hoc General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC); the Educational Policy Committee (EPC); and the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC). This fall, all three committees unanimously approved the enclosed proposal for restructuring the GEP.

The recommended integration of the requirements within the General Education Program has been achieved by grouping current requirements into three areas: (I) Communication and Literacy; (II) Natural and Social Sciences; and (III) Culture, Society, and the Arts. At the same time, the Distributed requirement has been replaced with four distinctive categories: Historical Perspectives; International and Global Issues; Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts; and Values, Society, and Diversity.

While discussing these changes, the committees made three important decisions:

- Every currently approved GE course will remain approved for the restructured program.
- The departmental administrative home of an affected course will recommend where the course should be placed in the new GEP. The GECC will review this recommendation for consistency and clarity.
- All credit hour requirements and all policies and procedures governing the CLAS General Education Program will remain unchanged.
The rationale for these decisions is discussed in the following proposal.

2. **Current General Education Program**
All students entering the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences who wish to earn a BA, BS, BFA, BLS, or BM degree must complete the current General Education requirements.

There are currently 9 required areas within the General Education Program with 12 different categories of courses.

The links below provide additional information on each requirement as well as a list of courses included in the category.

- **Rhetoric**: 4-8 s.h., according to placement
- **Foreign Language**: fourth-semester proficiency
- **Interpretation of Literature**: minimum of 3 s.h.
- **Historical Perspectives**: minimum of 3 s.h.
- **Humanities**: minimum of 3 s.h.
- **Natural Sciences**: minimum of 7 s.h., one lab required
- **Quantitative or Formal Reasoning**: minimum of 3 s.h.
- **Social Sciences**: minimum of 3 s.h.
- **Distributed General Education**: At least 6 s.h. required with a minimum of 3 s.h. taken from two different categories listed below:
  - **Cultural Diversity**
  - **Fine Arts**
  - **Foreign Civilization and Culture**
  - **Health and Physical Activity**
  - **Historical Perspectives**
  - **Humanities**
  - **Social Sciences**

Students are allowed to fulfill these requirements in numerous ways, including by Advanced Placement credit, transfer courses, and by the completion of an AA degree from a community college in Iowa. None of these policies have been changed by the restructuring of the GEP.

More information on the CLAS General Education Program, including how to propose a course, may be found at this link: [http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/gep/index.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/gep/index.shtml)
### 3. Proposed Restructured General Education Program

#### I Communication and Literacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rhetoric</td>
<td>3-8 s.h., according to placement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of Literature</td>
<td>minimum of 3 s.h.</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Languages</td>
<td>through the fourth-semester of proficiency</td>
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#### II Natural, Quantitative, and Social Sciences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>minimum of 7 s.h.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative or Formal Reasoning</td>
<td>minimum of 3 s.h.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>minimum of 3 s.h.</td>
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#### III Culture, Society, and the Arts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Requirements</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical Perspectives</td>
<td>minimum of 3 s.h.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International and Global Issues</td>
<td>minimum of 3 s.h.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts</td>
<td>minimum of 3 s.h.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values, Society, and Diversity</td>
<td>minimum of 3 s.h.</td>
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The tripartite organizational structure gives a visual clarity to the GE requirements while suggesting areas of commonality. The structure clarifies and integrates categories of courses that have a relation to each other, showing students the intent of the requirements while suggesting that disciplines support each other in the exploration of knowledge.

4. Descriptions, Outcomes, and Guidelines
The following descriptions, outcomes, and guidelines for the three new categories in Area III were also written and unanimously recommended for approval by GEAC, EPC, and GECC.

The current GE requirements carry similar descriptions and outcomes and are used by GECC when considering courses for GE status. These current criteria and descriptions are available at this site and have been used as a source when possible for the new categories:
http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/gep/areas.shtml

The descriptions of the categories are meant primarily for students and thus are purposely kept direct and concise. The descriptions are also meant to help faculty understand the categories and to remind the General Education Curriculum Committee of how students are being directed to understand them.

The outcomes are meant for faculty, GECC, and students. It is hoped that the outcomes will remind faculty of the shared goals of the categories and that GECC will find the outcomes useful while discussing proposals for GE status and during the five-year review of GE courses. The outcomes suggest to students the reasons for and importance of the GE requirements.

The course approval guidelines are written for faculty and for GECC member and very broadly define the parameters of each category. The guidelines are meant to be flexible but directive.

Historical Perspectives
Since this is a category in the current GE Program, changes were not made to the category description or outcomes.

International and Global Issues Area
Description
Courses examine contemporary international or global issues, introducing students to the perspectives of other nations or cultures.

Outcomes
- Students develop knowledge of one or more contemporary global or international issue.
- Students demonstrate a greater awareness of various perspectives and a deeper appreciation of how differences arise.
- Students are better able to adapt to the complexity and diversity of contemporary life through their understanding of international and global contexts.
- Students know and are able to apply at least one method of analysis and critical inquiry.

Course Approval Guidelines
Courses in this area help students to understand contemporary issues from an international or global perspective by focusing predominantly on countries or issues outside of the United States.

Courses studying a single country or using a historical perspective must place the subject within a contemporary international or global context.
Courses from many disciplines and interdisciplinary units may be approved in this area. Courses may be introductions or surveys or may focus more specifically on a particular topic or set of topics.

Course goals are achieved through various combinations of reading, speaking, writing, research, and experiential learning.

All courses must meet the Comprehensive Criteria for the General Education Program. In particular, students should have ample opportunities to develop critical thinking and to use communication skills appropriate to the discipline. Please see the Comprehensive Criteria for more information.

**Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts**

*Description*
Courses in literary, visual, and performing arts provide opportunities for students to appreciate art, to analyze art in historical and theoretical context, and in some courses to create works of art or performances.

*Outcomes*
- Students develop the analytic, expressive, and imaginative abilities needed to understand and/or create art.
- Students recognize constituent parts of an artwork and the processes of artistic production.
- Students recognize how aesthetic and critical meanings are attached to artworks and to understand ways quality can be evaluated.
- Students relate art to the broader human context (e.g. historical, social, ethnic, economic, geographic) in which it is created, including, for example, how an artwork or form is linked to the artist’s culture and identity.

*Course Approval Guidelines*
Literary, visual, and performing arts courses may focus on artistic processes or on analysis of finished works, whether created by professionals or by students themselves. Courses emphasizing processes will provide ample opportunity for students to engage actively in producing art; courses emphasizing analysis will give students ample experience applying one or more methods of research and critical inquiry.

Courses from many disciplines and interdisciplinary units may be approved in this area. Courses may be introductions or surveys or may focus more specifically on a particular topic or set of topics.

Course goals are achieved through various combinations of performance, production, critical analysis, reading, writing, and research.

All courses must meet the Comprehensive Criteria for General Education. In particular, students should have ample opportunities to develop critical thinking and to use communication skills appropriate to the discipline. Please see the Comprehensive Criteria for more information.

**Values, Society, and Diversity**

*Description*
Courses explore fundamental questions regarding human experience from a cultural, social, performative, philosophical, or spiritual perspective.
Outcomes
- Students gain knowledge of at least one approach to understanding human experience.
- Students demonstrate a greater awareness of various perspectives and a deeper appreciation of how differences arise.
- Students consider and apply their knowledge in relation to their own values and actions.
- Students know and are able to apply at least one method of analysis and critical inquiry.

Course Approval Guidelines
Courses focus on the ways individuals and cultures have interpreted and understood themselves, others, and the world, exploring value systems and expressions of human aspiration and belief. Courses may also interpret and examine culture, community, identity formation, and the human experience.

Courses focusing on U.S. cultural diversity are especially encouraged. Such courses foster greater understanding of one or more social groups identified by race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class, sexual orientation, or any other significant manifestation of human diversity.

Courses from many disciplines and interdisciplinary units may be approved in this area. Courses may be introductions or surveys or may focus more specifically on a particular topic or set of topics.

Course goals are achieved through various combinations of reading, speaking, writing, research, and experiential learning.

All courses must meet the Comprehensive Criteria for the General Education Program. In particular, students should have ample opportunities to develop critical thinking and to use communication skills appropriate to the discipline. Please see the Comprehensive Criteria for more information.

5. Rationale
The reaccreditation report called for integration and clarification of the GE requirements without essential changes to the current GEP. The General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC), an ad hoc committee charged to carry out this recommendation, examined various ways to restructure the GEP without changing requirements or policies and procedures and without excluding any course currently in the General Education Program.

This integration and clarification of the GE requirements was achieved in part by grouping current requirements into three areas.

Communication and Literacy
The first area stresses communication and literacy, alluding to Iowa as a university with a strong tradition in written, oral, and visual communication.

Rhetoric occurs first on the list since it is a prerequisite to Interpretation of Literature and all students are required to take Rhetoric immediately upon entering the University and until the requirement is completed. Thus the placement of Communication and Literacy at the head of the list should suggest to students the importance of beginning these courses in their first year.

The area title is meant to emphasize that Iowa requires at least 7 s.h. of course work in the area of communication and literacy. The survey conducted by the reaccreditation committee showed that students value the study of second language in part because of the knowledge it imparts of their first language, enhancing their communication skills. That view is clarified by the inclusion of the Foreign Language requirement into the Communication and Literacy Area.
The Foreign Language category was renamed World Languages to stress a global approach to language study. Spanish, for example, is a language spoken within the U.S. as well as in other countries; the distinction of “foreign” no longer seems appropriate. The language units were consulted and the majority concurred with this change.

**Natural and Social Sciences**
Area II includes the current requirements within the Natural Sciences, and the Social Sciences, and the Quantitative or Formal Reasoning categories. These were organized into one area to suggest their common approach to knowledge.

Naming this area was difficult since the QFR requirement contains courses from a number of departments, including mathematics, statistics, computer science, philosophy, linguistics, and communication studies. To add the word “mathematics” to the title would exclude other disciplines; to use the entire QFR title within the area title seemed redundant.

The departments and programs consulted within this area generally accepted the practicality of the shortened title. No changes to this cluster of requirements were made.

**Culture, Society, and the Arts**
According to the reaccreditation report, faculty and students alike find the Distributed requirement in the current GEP to be confusing. This requirement states that students must take 6 s.h. of courses, with at least 3 s.h. chosen from two of the following categories: Cultural Diversity; Fine Arts; Foreign Civilization and Culture; Health and Physical Activity; Historical Perspectives; Humanities; and Social Sciences.

The confusion is multiplied by the fact that three of the categories are repeated. Historical Perspectives, Humanities, and Social Sciences appear twice in the current GEP, both as requirements in themselves and as choices within the seven categories of the Distributed Area.

GEAC removed the distributed requirement and replaced it with three new categories and with the current Historical Perspectives category. The area was titled Culture, Society, and the Arts, a name that helps to show the commonality of this very wide range of courses.

The three new categories in the Culture, Society, and the Arts area were formed by looking for common focuses or approaches within the former Distributed courses. The committees felt that this procedure would help indicate key issues and approaches within the courses in the GE Program. At the same time, by keeping all courses and by renaming the areas to which the courses belonged, minimal change was made to the content of the program.

**Humanities**
The committees felt that the Humanities category was so broad as to be almost meaningless to students who generally lack an understanding of the term. GEAC consequently attempted to sort these courses into categories with titles that would more clearly indicate their focus. These courses seem to fall into two distinctive groups. One group of courses focuses on the arts, including the history, theory, interpretation and production of art, with courses ranging from the literary arts and creative writing to courses in dance, music, studio arts, theatre, cinema, and art history. This cluster of courses is also strengthened by the number of courses in the Fine Arts category within the Distributed area, and thus suggested the title, Literary, Visual, and Performing Arts.

**Values, Society, and Diversity**
Many courses in the former Humanities area share a concern with the values of society and
their relation to human experience. Courses in the Cultural Diversity category in the Distributed area speak to this concern as do courses from the categories of Social Sciences, Foreign Civilization and Culture, and Health and Physical Activity. This cluster of courses suggested the title for the Values, Society, and Diversity category, also in Area III.

Course from the former Cultural Diversity category within the Distributed area examine U.S. cultural diversity while many of the courses from other Distributed areas explore aspects of diversity from the perspective of countries and cultures outside of the U.S. It seemed appropriate to bring these focuses together, encouraging a study of international or global influences on U.S. diversity while offering students the opportunity of a wide exposure to issues relating to countries beyond the borders of the United States.

The committee acknowledged the importance of emphasizing diversity by including it in the category title.

In order to balance the weight of humanities courses with the social and natural sciences courses and the QFR courses, the Humanities requirement was removed altogether from the GEP while the Social Sciences category was left in place. Historical Perspectives now appears as a choice only once rather than twice as in the previous requirements.

**International and Global Issues**

Some courses in the Social Sciences category and the Foreign Civilization and Culture category examine international and global issues from a perspective outside of the United States. These grouping suggested the new category of International and Global Issues. Again, the committee also felt that the study of at least one course with its focus predominately on issues outside of the U.S. was important for all students earning an undergraduate degree from CLAS and reinforced the goals of the College and University strategic plan. The emphasis on Global Issues also allows for new courses to be created and made a part of the GEP in response to the Provost’s initiative for sustainability as an important area of research and study.

With the removal of the Distributed requirement which gave students a choice of seven areas to select courses from, the new configuration gives students more direction, requiring that courses be taken from four rather than seven categories. At the same time, the range of courses within any one of these categories will represent a similar range of courses to those that appear in the current GEP. The strength of the current GE Program, with its wide range of choices and flexibility, has been maintained, challenging students about their preconceived notions that the disciplines are not related.

6. **Other Issues**

During many discussions, GEAC, EPC, and GECC explored other configurations and options for restructuring the Program. It was argued, for example, that the GEP should require all students to complete a computer science course or a second social science course or a second QFR course. The committee also examined in detail the addition of a writing component to the GEP. No one doubted that all of these were important areas of studies for CLAS students.

GEAC, however, returned to its original charge many times. The reaccreditation study did not call for additional credit hour requirements or for the addition of courses in any one area or for their removal. The study found the GEP to be a strong program fulfilling almost all of its intended outcomes. As a result, the charge to GEAC was to clarify and restructure the requirements that already existed and not to add or subtract from the Program.

GEAC, EPC, and GECC also discussed the role of the Health and Physical Activity category within the Distributed requirement. This category seemed distinctive to some members of the
committee, who noted the importance of courses within the category to students’ health, to their transition to UI, and to their academic life. Other members were concerned with whether or not these courses belonged in the GEP.

The committees, in dialogue with each other, concluded that any decision to exclude already approved courses from the restructured GEP would be a significant change and would be outside of the charge to GEAC since the original reaccreditation report did not note a concern with any particular course or courses in the Program. Secondly, the committee restructuring the GEP was charged with making as few changes as possible. In conversation with the department offering the Health and Physical Activity courses, it became clear that the courses emphasize values and their relation to the self and to society and that the department could move these courses to at least one of the new categories in Area III, Values, Society, and Diversity. Since Health and Physical Activity courses, like all GE courses, have been reviewed and securitized during normal CLAS procedures, the committees decided that these courses, like all other approved GE courses, are an important part of the Program.

7. Placement of GE Courses
Since GEAC could not recommend the removal of any one course or courses from the GEP, it also decided that it was outside of its mandate to place any particular GE course into any specific new area or category of the restructured GEP.

The committee decided that that task must follow normal collegiate procedures with departments proposing the placement of currently approved GE courses into the new categories, just as they do now.

According to CLAS procedures and policies, those departmental requests are always reviewed first by GECC and then by EPC without the approval of any other governing body. The same process will be followed for the movement of current GE courses into new categories.

GECC has asked that this process be made as simple as possible and would like each request for a new placement of a course or a group of courses to be accompanied by a one paragraph rationale from the administrative home of the course or courses.

As is current policy, departments may continue to propose that a course has GE status in more than one GE area, and GECC and EPC will continue to scrutinize the appropriateness of those requests. Information on the current review process and on proposing GE status for a course may be found here: http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/gep/index.shtml

8. Policies
During its many discussions and in keeping with its mandate from the reaccreditation report, GEAC decided that its charge excluded changing any other GE credit hour requirements or policies affecting students. GEAC decided that such changes are best left to the General Education Curriculum Committee and the Educational Policy Committee who are charged with such matters by the CLAS Manual of Procedure.

Likewise, no changes have been made to any of the General Education policies affecting students or to the total credit hour requirements of the Program.

For example, students may not count any course for more than one requirement and may not use more than three courses from any one department to fulfill a requirement. These policies remain unchanged.
Students may continue to use GE courses to fulfill requirements for a major, minor, or certificate if allowed by the offering department or program, as current policy dictates.

All policies and credit hour requirements pertaining to students may be found in the CLAS Academic Handbook at this section: http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/students/academic_handbook/viadditional.shtml

9. Additional Background Information

Common Academic Experience Reaccreditation Report

In the 2006-2007 academic year, the General Education Program was studied as part of a larger study on the Iowa undergraduate educational experience, conducted for the UI reaccreditation process. Six subcommittees under the direction of the Office of the Provost and the Reaccreditation Steering Committee were involved in the study, with the Common Academic Experience (CAE) subcommittee examining the UI General Education Program. The CAE met bimonthly during the 2006-2007 academic year and surveyed students, faculty, and employers, studying the GE Program and its accomplishments.

After completing its study, the Common Academic Subcommittee praised the current GE Program and in particular noted the many strengths of the GEP in its reaccreditation report:
- CLAS provides strong oversight for the Program, helping to ensure its quality by requiring documented adherence to the Program’s goals; consistency of course offerings; and training or oversight of teaching assistantships.
- All courses are reviewed every five years by the General Education Curriculum Committee and the Educational Policy Committee.
- Many of the GE course offerings change frequently and thus represent a flexible curriculum, especially for a large research institution. As reported on the student survey, each area of the Program brings unique expertise to at least one of the key goals in the GE mission.
- Students, when surveyed, understood many of intended outcomes of the General Education Program and felt they were being met.
- Faculty also understood the outcomes, suggesting a shared sense of academic values and purpose as reflected in the GEP.
- Employers, during the interviews, recognized the importance of the intended outcomes of the GEP and spoke well of their value and of an education from The University of Iowa, in part because of the strength of the GEP.

Report Recommendations

While lauding the strengths of the program, the reaccreditation report made recommendations for immediate and future changes. The report recommended that the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences appoint a committee “to study and suggest possible new organizational structures and area names for the General Education Program” in order to “create a more coherent, integrated program focusing, if possible, on the unique educational and cultural experiences offered by The University of Iowa.”

The report also called for a reconsideration of the role of the distributed category within the GEP, which faculty and students both found as confusing. The report recommended that in the future the College assess and study the GEP again, perhaps at first focusing on communication skills since faculty and students during the study observed the difficulties of both learning and teaching these in larger GE courses.

The General Education Advisory Committee

The General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) was formed by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum to suggest possible strategies for pursuing the
immediate recommendations of the CAE report. Members of other colleges were also invited to serve on this committee since each college requires students to fulfill some configuration of the GE requirements before graduation.

The General Education Advisory Committee was formed in fall 2007 and met bimonthly during the academic year. It reconvened for weekly meetings in September 2008; a subcommittee also met during the summer months of 2008.

The following people served on the General Education Advisory Committee:

**Helena Dettmer**, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs and Curriculum; Chair of the General Education Advisory Committee; Co-chair of the Common Academic Experience Subcommittee.

**Jim Cremer**, DEO of the Department of Computer Science; member of the GEAC summer subcommittee.

**Pat Folsom**, Assistant Provost of Enrollment Services and the Director of Academic Advising; AAC liaison to GECC; member of the GEAC summer subcommittee.

**David Gier**, School of Music.

**Thomas Gioielli**, student member, Department of Psychology.

**Lisa Heineman**, Department of History.

**Peter Hlebowitsh**, College of Education, Chair of the Department of Teaching and Learning; member of the Common Academic Experience Subcommittee.

**Beth Ingram**, Associate Dean of the Henry B. Tippie Undergraduate Program.

**Brooks Landon**, Department of English, Director of the General Education Literature Program.

**Dennis Moore**, DEO of the Department of Rhetoric; member of the Common Academic Experience subcommittee; member of the GEAC summer subcommittee.

**Alec Scranton**, Associate Dean for Academic Programs of the College of Engineering.

**Walter Seaman**, Department of Mathematics; member of the GEAC summer subcommittee.

**Caroline Tolbert**, Department of Political Science.

The Educational Policy Committee and the General Education Curriculum Committee

Members of the Educational Policy Committee and of the General Education Curriculum Committee also played an important role in shaping the proposal, responding to and revising many drafts.

*The Educational Policy Committee*

- **Mary Adamek** (Music)
- **Susan Birrell** (Health & Sport Studies)
- **Miriam Gilbert** (English)
- **Anne Kvinge** (student member)
- **Mercedes Niño-Murcia** (Spanish/Portuguese)
- **Mark Reagan** (Geoscience)
- **David Redlawsk** (Political Science)
- **Alberto Maria Segre** (Computer Science)
- **Roumyana Slabakova** (Linguistics)
- **Gary Small** (Chemistry)

*General Education Curriculum Committee*

- **Paula Kempchinsky** (Spanish and Portuguese) Chair of GECC,
- **Katherine Krick** (student member)
- **Philip Kutzko** (Mathematics)
- **Elizabeth Pelton** (Health and Sport Studies)
- **Wayne Polyzou** (Physics and Astronomy)
**Sonia Ryang** (Anthropology)
**Carol Severino** (Rhetoric, for Fall 2008)
**Pat Folsom** (liaison from the Academic Advising Center)
**Miriam Gilbert** (liaison from EPC, English)

**DEO Involvement**
All DEOs were invited to two meetings concerning the restructuring project during winter 2007 and spring 2008. More than 60 people attended the various sessions. The feedback from these sessions on earlier drafts helped to lead to crucial decisions affecting the final version of the plan.

**Other Consultations**
The Chair of the Committee also met individually with the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education, who supported the GEP restructuring proposal. The Academic Advising Center and Admissions were also consulted on the changes, with each office making suggestions for the final version of the restructuring and each strongly endorsing the plan. The proposed changes are seen by these offices as a welcome update that clarifies for students the importance and intentions of the GEP. Finally, two other undergraduate colleges, the Tippie College of Business and the College of Engineering, were included on the General Education Advisory Committee. The Tippie College of Business is currently reshaping its GE requirements in response to the CLAS changes.

Additional information may be found at the General Education Advisory Committee web page: [http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/governance/geadvisoryc.shtml](http://www.clas.uiowa.edu/faculty/governance/geadvisoryc.shtml)