

# General Education Review Committee Final Report

January 2016

## Introduction and Overview

General Education stands at the center of the liberal arts mission of Harvard College. For more than a century, starting with the class of 1914, students at Harvard have been required to choose a concentration in which they achieve specialized knowledge in a focused area of inquiry.<sup>1</sup> The General Education program aims to answer the more fundamental question: What is the purpose of an education overall, regardless of the particular, specialized knowledge that one achieves? What, in other words, is a liberal education for?

The current version of General Education at Harvard answers this question explicitly: the program aims to prepare students for a life of civic and ethical engagement with a changing world, a world in which one's identity flows out of the societies and traditions in which one is grounded, even as one's way of existence helps to shape and change those very traditions. In this way the College re-affirms the original purpose of General Education, that it should address "that part of a student's whole education which looks first of all to his (*sic*) life as a responsible human being and citizen."<sup>2</sup> This philosophy ties the current General Education program not only to its founding predecessor at Harvard, but to a more basic and ancient ideal. Education, on this account, prepares one for an *Ars Vivendi in Mundo* – an art of living wisely in the world.

Although the current version of General Education harkens back to the fundamental ideals of the original program, it separates these ideals from the particular political context of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century around which the original program was organized. The political and national uniformity of the student body in 1946 no longer characterizes the diverse population we serve. Similarly, the world our students graduate into is increasingly interconnected, and issues of diversity and inclusion are of critical importance. The current program is explicitly oriented, therefore, around a global aim that is manifest in four philosophical principles:

- To engage with large questions about the nature of civic virtue;
- To explore questions of identity that are born of, supported by, and constitutive of societies and traditions;
- To investigate the ethical dimensions of what people say and do;

---

<sup>1</sup> See Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1964), p. 446.

<sup>2</sup> This phrase is taken from the original General Education program at Harvard, which came into existence in 1946. That original program was based on a report written by a faculty committee formed by President Conant and led by Professor John Finley, of the Classics Department. The report was published as *General Education in a Free Society* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1945). This passage comes from p. 51.

- To examine the nature of individual, social, scientific, and technological change, including how one responds constructively and critically to it.

The [Report of the Task Force on General Education](#), from which our program derives, is explicit not only about these particular philosophical principles but about the overall purpose of and reason for General Education. General Education is, according to the report, a crucial aspect of the liberal education at the center of the Harvard College curriculum; at the center, in other words, of “an education conducted in a spirit of free inquiry undertaken without concern for topical relevance or vocational utility.”<sup>3</sup> But a liberal education of this kind, although it is neither topical nor vocational, is not thereby useless. Indeed, it is essential preparation for our lives as citizens and responsible individuals, not only because it will help us to appreciate the historical and cultural context in which civic and ethical decisions get their significance, but just as importantly because it will de-familiarize our settled presuppositions about that context, and help us to re-imagine it for the better.<sup>4</sup> In this way, the report concludes, “General education is a statement about why a liberal education matters.”<sup>5</sup>

Although these are the explicit and noble aims of the General Education Program, other forces drive the current implementation as well. These forces are equally noble, but they are grounded in distinct conceptions of the aim of a liberal arts and sciences education. This report identifies two such strands, each with a fascinating history both at Harvard and in the culture more generally. The first is predicated on the idea that to be well educated is to know something about a range of important domains of inquiry. This principle leads easily to the idea that a distribution requirement should be a central component of general education. The second, by contrast, emphasizes the act of taking responsibility for one’s own education. On this account, a student needs to have a broad range of electives in order to benefit from the educational experience.

In our Interim Report, the General Education Review Committee identified the problems that arose as these competing but largely unstated principles worked surreptitiously to shape both the current implementation of the program and the sense of dissatisfaction with it. The implicit desire for distribution requirements increased the size of the program beyond what was needed for its stated philosophical aims, and in the process undermined its philosophical identity. At the same time, it resulted in a set of requirements that felt unmotivated and intrusive to students and faculty alike.

One possible response to this problem is to focus and streamline the General Education Program so that it more clearly implements and reflects its explicit grounding principles, rejecting the alternatives as contaminating impurities. But in extensive discussions with the students, faculty, teaching fellows, and administrators, this Committee has come to

---

<sup>3</sup> [Report of the Task Force on General Education](#), 2007, p. 1. The Task Force on General Education was co-chaired by Prof. Louis Menand of the English Department and Prof. Alison Simmons of the Philosophy Department.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-3.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

believe that all three competing conceptions of the liberal arts and sciences deserve a role at the College. Not only does each find a place in the history of the College and the culture more generally, each continues to find articulate and forceful representation within our community today. Indeed, in studying the history of General Education at Harvard, we have come to believe that this complicated heritage runs through the program from the start. Arguably at least, the uneasy interaction among the three core philosophies of the liberal arts and sciences has been a factor in the discontent that surrounded each of the previous iterations of General Education at the College.<sup>6</sup>

We propose, therefore, a structure that does justice to the importance of each of the three motivating philosophies for a liberal arts and sciences education, while addressing the problems of identity and size. We also propose a system of administrative and financial support that will give the courses in the program the central position in the curriculum that they deserve, and allow them to be among the best courses on offer at the College. The General Education Program has an ambitious and admirable aim, which the Review Committee endorses enthusiastically. But the implicit philosophies of distribution and elective deserve an explicit place in the College curriculum as well. The proposals we make here are guided by the principle that we should maintain as much of what currently works about the program as possible (which is a not inconsiderable amount), while proposing a structure that allows it to best achieve its explicit and implicit aims.

### **1. History of the Liberal Arts and Sciences at Harvard**

The explicit, motivating goal of the current [Program in General Education](#) is to prepare students for a life of civic and ethical engagement with a changing world. The College sees in this goal a new interpretation of the classic ideal: *Ars Vivendi in Mundo*. Over the history of Harvard College, various other educational philosophies have also held sway.

The General Education philosophy has a distinguished history both at Harvard and more generally. The general impulse behind the program is ancient. It is found, for instance, in the Roman ideal for an education, under the Empire, which was explicitly to prepare one for the *ars vivendi*.<sup>7</sup> At Harvard the original General Education program, proposed in 1946, was organized around the idea that an education should help a student to understand the obligations and privileges of living in a free, democratic society. This proposal was meant to supplant the 19<sup>th</sup> century ideal for American colleges, which was to educate the good, Christian, gentleman.<sup>8</sup> Our current program is a version of the original General Education ideal: it provides a unifying purpose for an education that ties it to the ideals of a well-lived life, and its structure reflects the value of approaching these connections from a variety of perspectives. It departs from the original program, however,

---

<sup>6</sup> See, for instance, the memo from Dean Rosovsky to the Members of the Faculty from April 3, 1978, for an account of the way the Core Curriculum attempts to balance these aims.

<sup>7</sup> See, for instance, Cicero *De Fin.* 1.42 et. al, and Seneca *Epistles* 88.2.

<sup>8</sup> See Paul Buck, John Finley, et. al., *General Education in a Free Society* (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1945), p. 43.

in its acknowledgment of the greater diversity of our student body. In particular, the current program explicitly separates itself from the particular political context that made sense in the middle of the last century, replacing it with a much more global paradigm.

The distributional philosophy of the liberal arts and sciences also has an ancient pedigree. A version of this philosophy, for example, is naturally seen in the traditional, medieval curriculum of the seven liberal arts.<sup>9</sup> Scholars in the 21<sup>st</sup> century don't agree with the medieval conception of *which* disciplines are essential, of course, even if some of our own disciplines are direct descendants of the original Trivium and Quadrivium. But the idea that a well-educated student should have mastered, or at least had some exposure to, a range of disciplinary methods and content has endured. At Harvard, something like this distributional impulse seems to have motivated the Core Curriculum that lasted from 1978 to 2009. It was also a central part of President Lowell's "Concentration and Distribution" system from the early part of the twentieth century. The goal of this structure was twofold, according to Lowell: a student was expected to know "a little of everything and something well."<sup>10</sup>

The third philosophy of the liberal arts and sciences can be thought of as an ideal based on the Emersonian notion of education as self-actualization. This ideal prioritizes the importance of a student's taking responsibility for his or her own education, especially through the elective selection of courses from across the catalog. The philosophy can be traced back at least to Rousseau and the Romanticism he inspired, a movement that Emerson appropriated for the American context.<sup>11</sup> Under President Eliot in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Harvard was the first college to organize its curriculum around this ideal, by implementing an elective system that allowed students almost complete freedom to explore the courses offered at the College.<sup>12</sup> The elective system instituted by Eliot was a radical departure from the traditional 19<sup>th</sup> century college curriculum, but it influenced colleges across the country. By 1904, every large college or university across the country had adopted it.<sup>13</sup>

The history of educational philosophies at Harvard since the 19<sup>th</sup> century prioritizes these three ways of thinking about the core values of a liberal arts and sciences education. We propose a structure that does justice to each.

---

<sup>9</sup> The liberal arts education in the middle ages was typically divided into two parts. The Trivium comprised the three foundational courses: Logic, Grammar, and Rhetoric. (Our word "trivial" derives from this part of the curriculum.) The Quadrivium, which was the more advanced part of the course, comprised Arithmetic, Geometry, Astronomy, Music.

<sup>10</sup> Morison, *op cit.*

<sup>11</sup> See, among other places, Emerson's essay "The American Scholar." This was originally delivered in 1837 as a speech to the Phi Beta Kappa Society at the The First Parish in Cambridge, here in Harvard Square.

<sup>12</sup> See, for instance, the discussion of Eliot's elective system in Morison, *op cit.*, pp. 341-6.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 384.

## **2. History and Remit of the General Education Review Committee**

The current Program in General Education is the third in a series of Harvard programs that reach back almost seventy years. The [Report of the Task Force on General Education](#), following a [comprehensive curricular review](#) in the early 2000s, proposed the current Program in 2007. The Faculty of Arts and Sciences voted to approve the report and to adopt the new program in May 2007. The [Final Legislation Establishing the Program in General Education](#) provides programmatic details and its motivating conception of liberal education. The Program was first available to students entering in the fall of 2009. The legislation called for the Dean of the Faculty to appoint a committee to review the Program within five years of its inception.

Dean Smith constituted the General Education Review Committee (GERC) in the spring of 2014. The Committee comprises senior faculty members from each of the three divisions of the FAS - Arts and Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences – as well as from the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. The Committee produced an [Interim Report](#) in February 2015 that described the current state of the Program, highlighting successes but also emphasizing areas in need of improvement. The major problems it identified are the lack of a clear identity for the program and its uncertain and expanding boundaries. The Interim Report also offered a [Brief History of General Education at Harvard](#), interpreting the current program in relation to its predecessors, and it concluded by outlining a range of possible improvements.

The Interim Report generated much discussion. After collecting extensive feedback from faculty, graduate students, undergraduates, and administrators, the Committee now offers this Final Report. We propose an implementation of General Education that reflects and focuses both the explicit and implicit principles that motivate the Program. These proposals aim to help the Program achieve the high aspirations the faculty had in approving it.

## **3. Proposals**

The Committee proposes that the liberal arts and sciences curriculum at the College include the following three components:

- A General Education requirement consisting of four diverse courses explicitly developed to satisfy the aims of General Education. The General Education Standing Committee will approve General Education courses.
- A Distribution requirement consisting of three departmental courses, spread across the three divisions of the FAS and SEAS.
- A set of College or Departmental requirements in writing, foreign language, and quantitative facility. The quantitative facility requirement would build on aspects of the current EMR category, but would be newly defined and implemented in ways similar to existing College requirements in Expository Writing and Foreign Languages.

We believe this proposal produces a structure that separates out the two major aims of the current program (general education and distribution), while also allowing the student greater freedom to explore the entire catalog of courses.

In addition to these major proposals, we outline an administrative support structure for the General Education Program. Enhanced commitments to supporting faculty, teaching fellows, and administrators within the program will help ensure that the General Education Program can achieve the goals it was designed to meet.

### **3.A. Four General Education courses**

The core of general education at Harvard should consist in four courses taken from those administered by the General Education Program. These courses aim to prepare students for a life of civic and ethical engagement with a changing world. All courses in the General Education curriculum will be explicitly designed to address the *Ars Vivendi in Mundo* philosophy. In particular, the courses should address explicitly how the subjects they cover are relevant to the social, ethical, and technological challenges we face, both individually and collectively, in a changing world.

The process of designing Gen Ed courses is distinctive. In designing a departmental course, it is normal to be guided by the question “What will students going on in the discipline need to know about its methods and content in order to be well-prepared for further study?” By contrast, in designing a Gen Ed course one might instead be guided by the following three questions:

- What does my area of inquiry have to offer of value to the society or culture at large?
- What does a student, who might otherwise have no further education in my area of inquiry, need to know in order to appreciate this value?
- How, in particular, will knowing these things help a student to think differently about his or her ethical decisions or approach differently his or her contributions to civil discourse and action?

Once designed and approved, Gen Ed courses will be given a Gen Ed course number. Each Gen Ed course will also be tagged. The tags associated with a course will indicate the perspective(s) from which the course approaches the issues of General Education. Three of the tags correspond roughly with the areas of inquiry pursued in the divisions of the FAS and SEAS, as they intersect with the principles of the General Education curriculum. The fourth tag, Ethics and Civics, reflects a category that has (in one interpretation or another) been a stable feature of General Education at Harvard since its inception. The tags are:

- Aesthetics, Culture, Interpretation
- Histories, Societies, Individuals
- Science and Technology in Society
- Ethics and Civics

These tags can also be thought of as combining and broadening the former General Education categories.<sup>14</sup>

To facilitate the transfer and approval of courses, the General Education Standing Committee (GESC) may assign tags by default according to current categories and an instructor's primary divisional affiliation, but faculty members can also propose to the GESC a different or additional tag.

Courses that are currently successful in the General Education program would clearly be eligible to remain within the program. New courses will be evaluated for approval by the GESC. *All* courses will henceforth be approved for a certain number of iterations, after which the GESC will review them for re-approval, should the instructor so desire. Existing courses will also require re-approval after a certain number of iterations.

Ordinarily no course will have more than two tags. Students must take one course with each of the four tags. For courses with more than one tag, students may select the requirement that the course fulfills. No single course, however, can count for more than one tag.

## ***Discussion***

### **3.A.1. Transition in Role of Departmental Courses**

The four-course General Education requirement aims to streamline and focus the stated identity of the General Education Program: to prepare students for a life of civic and ethical engagement in a changing world. The existing program consists equally of “front-of-the-book” courses designed explicitly to serve the principles of General Education, and “back-of-the-book” or “departmental” courses, which are typically designed with departmental interests in mind. The departmental courses obscure the identity of the General Education Program. By removing them from the General Education Program, we expect the unity and purpose of the “front-of-the-book” courses to come more explicitly into focus. At the same time, by creating a separate Distribution Requirement, the student still has an opportunity and an incentive to take these departmental courses. It will simply be clearer what the aim of taking them should be. Moreover, departmental courses in the

---

<sup>14</sup> Thus, ACI brings together the existing categories of Aesthetic and Interpretive Understanding and Culture and Belief; HSI combines the existing categories of Societies of the World and US and the World, and acknowledges the importance of history (currently captured in the “Study of the Past” requirement); STS replaces Science of Living Systems and Science of the Physical Universe with courses that explicitly place science and technology in a social context; and EC recasts the existing Ethical Reasoning requirement with a formulation more openly encompassing issues of public engagement and diversity. (The current requirement in Empirical and Mathematical Reasoning will find a place in the set of broader College requirements.) In the current General Education curriculum, categories are already combined this way for transfer and study abroad students.

current General Education Program must be approved by the Standing Committee. As no approval process is necessary for the Distribution Requirement, this will open a broader range of courses to students.

Faculty members teaching departmental courses that are currently part of the General Education Programs are of course welcome to resubmit them as “front-of-the-book” courses. Some will make this transition more easily than others. Among those courses that might be expected to make the transition the most easily are those that are designated as “back-of-the-book” courses simply because they have pre-requisites. Although the legislation establishing the program nowhere suggests that “front-of-the-book” courses cannot have pre-requisites, in practice such courses have not been allowed. So long as departmental courses were part of the Program, this practice had no ill effect. But with the elimination of departmental courses it should be stated explicitly here that Gen Ed courses may be offered at various levels, and in particular may include courses that have pre-requisites. Naturally, a range of courses that have no pre-requisites must be available for each of the tags.

### **3.A.2. Course Review Process**

While the departmental courses will be transitioned from the Program immediately, all courses – both new and remaining – will be subject to review after a certain number of iterations. The current Program has no system of review. This results in a large and unwieldy set of courses that will only increase in size over the years, thus undermining its identity and its quality alike. It also makes it impossible for the administration to imagine offering resources to courses in the Gen Ed Program, since committing to such a large number of courses would be too expensive. The review process for new and existing courses will allow the Program to maintain high standards and to be supported well by the administration, while also allowing it to change its detailed focus as changes in society and in student and faculty interests demand.

### **3.A.3. Size of the program and course size**

The smaller number of requirements reflects the smaller number of courses in the Program. By removing the departmental courses from the Program, we will end up with about half as many courses as before. With half as many course requirements, the average course size should remain about the same, although it is the Committee’s hope that Gen Ed courses ordinarily be maintained at smaller enrollment levels in order to fulfill their unique pedagogical mission. This analysis will vary across the divisions. The Natural Sciences and SEAS, in particular, will have to generate more General Education courses than they currently have. The vocal support from the faculty and administrators in these areas convinces us that there is a will to do so. But the success of the Program’s offerings in the STS category will depend not only upon the good will of the faculty but upon the support and encouragement from the administration and departmental leadership.

### **3.A.4. Tagging System**

Finally, the tagging system aims to retain what is good about the categorical structure of the General Education Program while solving two particular problems it generated.

What is good about the current categorical structure? The categories were motivated by the reasonable thought that it is important to have a range of perspectives on General Education. Questions about the ethics of self-driving cars, for instance, may lead to very different conversations, with very different conversational principles, than do questions about race and identity in the plays of Shakespeare. Each kind of conversation is valuable, and exposure to a range of them is important for the student. Insofar as the current categorical structure is intended to implement this reasonable idea, the Review Committee endorses it.

In its detail, however, the current structure generates two kinds of problems. First, because the process that produced the categories was dominated by the distributional impulse, the detailed descriptions of the categories obscure the overall philosophy of the program. The category descriptions often highlight disciplinary priorities, and as a result make it difficult to see how they are expressions of a single motivating aim. Furthermore, in offering a narrow and disjoint conception of the components of the Program, they encourage faculty and students alike to focus on the disciplinary priorities of each category instead of on the Program's overarching principles.

Second, and related to this, the narrow and disciplinary description of the categories excludes some of the most interesting course proposals. These proposals tend to cross disciplines in interesting ways, and the GESC reports that it can be difficult to find a place in the program for them.

The tagging system aims to solve both of these problems while accepting the basic idea that a range of perspectives on the issues of General Education is good. It does this by tying the perspective of the course, in the first instance, to the primary divisional affiliation of the faculty member teaching it, rather than to some detailed set of disciplinary priorities the course aims to achieve. The proposal, in other words, builds on the diversity of perspectives implicit in the background and training that faculty members in different divisions receive, rather than trying to define the perspectives explicitly.

This approach is not foolproof, of course. It can sometimes happen that a faculty member whose primary affiliation is in one division is nevertheless proposing, and is competent to teach, a Gen Ed course that offers perspectives most natural to a different division, or to more than one division. In such a case it would be up to the faculty member to make the case to the GESC that the course should be tagged accordingly.

The GESC will be charged with rendering decisions that generate an appropriate case history, and thereby an appropriate interpretation of the content of the tags. But there is already a large fund of information to guide these decisions. It derives from the suggestion that the categories are tied to divisional perspectives that, although not explicitly articulable, are nevertheless recognizable in the "family resemblance" sense.

Finally, the Committee proposes that ordinarily no course will have more than two tags. The tagging system is intended to encourage students to vary the perspectives from which they approach the issues of General Education, and the tags are designed to highlight the

primary perspective(s) of the course. Were the average number of tags per course to increase, the system's ability to encourage this variance disappears. Consider the extreme case in which every course has all four tags. In this case the system gives students no guidance at all in choosing courses. So, fewer tags means a system that more effectively guides the students.

From this argument we can see that the average number of tags must be smaller than four. But why should we allow for more than one tag on a course? There are two reasons. First, if this weren't allowed, it would be very hard to generate courses with the Ethics and Civics (EC) tag. The default system for assigning tags will ensure that no course gets an EC tag, since this tag does not align itself with a division and tags are assigned by the primary divisional affiliation of the faculty member teaching the course. So most courses with an EC tag will also have a second tag to go along with it. But secondly, it is important to encourage interdisciplinary courses. Since the tags are at the divisional level, this is already a possibility even if a course has only one tag. But a course that mixes science and policy, for instance, or aesthetics and society, is much to be admired. The two-tag option encourages this.

### **3.B. Three Distribution Courses**

Students will be required to take three departmental courses across the divisions of the FAS and SEAS:

- 1 departmental course in Arts and Humanities
- 1 departmental course in Social Sciences
- 1 departmental course in Natural Sciences or SEAS

With the exception of introductory and intermediate-level language classes, every departmental course in the catalog should be eligible to satisfy the distribution requirement. The primary course designation will determine which divisional requirement the course satisfies. In effect, this requirement obliges the student to explore the offerings in the catalog while placing extremely minimal restrictions on the shape that that exploration should take. Students will naturally, by virtue of their concentration, take a variety of courses in at least one of these divisions already. The Distribution Requirement will oblige them to take a course in each of the other two divisions as well. Advisors may well encourage students to take a course within their division but outside of their concentration. This is especially desirable if the concentration has a narrow focus. But this should not be a separate requirement.

The distribution requirement acknowledges the distributional principle of a liberal arts and sciences education, reflected implicitly in the current General Education Program by the presence of some 250 "back-of-the-book" courses. In the context of the other proposals, it also aims to satisfy the Emersonian principle that an education should consist in taking responsibility for one's own education through choosing its trajectory

and detail. It does this by reducing the overall number of requirements on the student<sup>15</sup> while also giving the student greater leeway to explore the course offerings.

### **3.C. One Course in Empirical and Mathematical Reasoning**

This requirement ensures that students reach a level of quantitative facility involving mathematical, statistical, and computational methods that will enable them to think critically about data as it is employed in fields of inquiry across the FAS and SEAS. These courses will also help prepare students for more advanced coursework involving quantitative methods. We propose that a committee be formed of faculty from across the College to define the goals of this category in detail, evaluate the extent to which those goals are currently being fulfilled, and provide guidance on what changes (if any) should be made to the group of courses that currently meet this requirement. Courses fulfilling this requirement should be available at levels suitable for students with a range of quantitative backgrounds.

### **4. Implementation Proposals**

General Education courses should be among the best that Harvard College has to offer. Because they typically require faculty to stretch beyond intellectual sub-specialties, however, and because they bring together students with a wide range of intellectual backgrounds, they are also the hardest to teach well. A good General Education Program will require financial support from the administration, buy-in from the departments, and willingness by faculty to design or continue teaching courses outside their sub-specialties. The Committee regards a well-developed support structure and incentives as crucial to the success of a strong Program in General Education.

Central to any such effort will be continuing support of the General Education Standing Committee. We believe that the changes proposed in this report will ease some of the administrative burdens the committee has faced to date. Nevertheless, we believe that increased staff will enable the Committee to work more actively with faculty in recruiting, developing, and maintaining successful courses. The GESG should have sufficient authority and resources available to allocate to course development, and to ensure that the program mount a consistent, coherent, and innovative range of course offerings.

The implementation proposals we offer here are separated into those that target Faculty, Graduate Students, and Departments and Administration.

---

<sup>15</sup> The current eight-course requirement is broken out into a 4+3+1 structure. (Four Gen Ed courses, three distribution courses in the divisions, and one quantitative facility course in the College.) But in practice one of the distribution courses will be satisfied automatically by the concentration, so in effect it is a seven-course requirement. It also remains possible that a student could place out of the quantitative facility course, which would reduce the requirement to six courses for some students. The current Report takes no stand on that possibility, however, referring the issue to the committee that it proposes should study the quantitative facility requirement.

#### **4.A. Faculty**

Faculty designing General Education courses should receive course development support at the level of, though not necessarily the same in detail as, that provided to faculty teaching HarvardX courses. During the period of course development, faculty should have available to them:

- A Gen Ed-specific IT team that works closely with faculty members on the development of course websites capable of integrating a range of online learning tools.
- Designated funding to hire a research assistant to work specifically on course development. (Funding could be used to create a pool of Graduate Fellows in General Education.)
- A centralized Gen Ed job listing database where faculty teaching interdisciplinary courses can seek and find qualified graduate students, postdocs, etc. in other departments.
- Continuing opportunities to teach Graduate Seminar in General Education program, with GSAS encouragement of graduate students across disciplines to enroll in these courses.

If designing a Gen Ed course presents specific challenges, so does maintaining a successful course. We propose the following forms of continuing support for faculty teaching in the General Education Program:

- Continuity of teaching staff through the creation of Gen Ed and Digital Preceptor positions.
- Coordination of TF recruitment by Gen Ed Program. TFs who already have teaching experience should be sought for Gen Ed positions.
- Full funding for course activities and assignments.
- Availability of funds for continued investment in course enhancements.
- Continuing Gen Ed support in classroom assignments, instructional lunches, photocopying, etc.

Finally, Faculty should be encouraged to develop strong courses for the General Education Program and rewarded for teaching them well. If Gen Ed courses are expected to be among the best on offer at the College, then good Gen Ed Faculty should be among the most prized by the College. The Deans should consider performance awards and other high-visibility incentives for such Faculty. One possibility is that great Gen Ed teaching should be a significant factor in awarding Harvard College Professorships. Alternatively, the administration could seek funding for an analogous Professorship that is explicitly designed to reward faculty teaching well in the Gen Ed Program.

#### **4.B. Graduate Students**

Teaching Fellows in the General Education Program face unique challenges due to the interdisciplinary quality of many Gen Ed courses, and the range of students enrolled in

them. To help TFs prepare for and lead successful sections in Gen Ed, we suggest the following:

- Small section sizes, with a target of 12 students per section and a cap of 14.
- Supplemental pay for teaching in Gen Ed.
- In-house training for TFs in Gen Ed, addressing the particular challenges – especially related to leading discussions and evaluating student work – that arise in Gen Ed courses.
- Performance awards for high-achieving TFs in the Gen Ed program.

#### **4.C. Departments and Administration**

At present, departmental involvement in the General Education Program varies considerably across the divisions. A clearer set of incentives for departmental involvement in the General Education Program will help ensure that the program include a wide and balanced range of courses. We suggest that Divisional Deans take into account departmental contributions to the General Education Program as part of their annual assessments of a department's hiring needs. Departments contributing regularly to the General Education Program may benefit from the appointment of Digital TF and Preceptor positions, College Fellows, and other instructional or administrative staff. We also encourage the Dean to take into account the needs of Gen Ed when authorizing hires.

There are larger administrative issues within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences that have an impact on the way General Education courses are developed, taught, and supported. These include issues related to graduate student funding and an inability accurately to predict enrollment in courses. Without information about enrollment, it is difficult to identify and adequately train graduate students to teach in General Education courses.

Moreover, the current graduate student funding model motivates some faculty to maximize course enrollments – and corresponding Teaching Fellow positions – as a way to support their Department's graduate programs. By contrast, other faculty members have challenges identifying and recruiting qualified graduate students to teach for Gen Ed courses. These structural issues can undermine the academic standards of the courses, and in other ways diminish the undergraduate student experience. Thus, we recommend that the College and Graduate School work to solve these structural obstacles, thereby helping to maintain high standards for General Education courses.

#### **Conclusion**

The mission of Harvard College is to educate the citizens and citizen leaders of the world. We do this through the transformative power of a liberal arts and sciences education. We also do this at a critical moment in higher education, as scholars ponder the best way to prepare students for life in a world of extraordinary diversity, constant technological change, unprecedented access to information, and a multiplicity of –isms and –ologies that both expand our understanding of each other, and undermine efforts at global

understanding. We believe that Harvard's General Education program, with its four-pillared focus on living wisely in the world, is a central element in our students' preparation as thoughtful, contributing members of society.

Respectfully Submitted,

Members of the General Education Review Committee

Sean D. Kelly (Chair), *Teresa G. and Ferdinand F. Martignetti Professor of Philosophy*

Jennifer Hochschild, *Henry LaBarre Jayne Professor of Government and Professor of African and African American Studies*

Maya Jasanoff, *Coolidge Professor of History*

Stephanie Sandler, *Ernest E. Monrad Professor of Slavic Languages & Literatures*

John H. Shaw, *Harry C. Dudley Professor of Structural and Economic Geology and Professor of Environmental Science and Engineering*

Robert Wood, *Charles River Professor of Engineering and Applied Sciences*

Todd Zickler, *William and Ami Kuan Danoff Professor of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science*