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MEMORANDUM

November 9, 2021

TO: Members of the Board of Trustees

FROM: Dr. Jim Malatras, Chancellor

SUBJECT: State University of New York General Education Policy

Action Requested

The proposed resolution establishes an updated SUNY General Education Framework applicable to all students pursuing a SUNY undergraduate degree. It directs the Chancellor or designee to work with campus leadership and faculty to implement local general education and undergraduate degree program requirements that are consistent with the SUNY General Education Framework, effective fall 2023 for A.A., A.S., and all baccalaureate degree programs, and no later than fall 2024 for A.A.S. and A.O.S. degree programs.

Resolution

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Whereas the mission of the State University of New York is to provide a comprehensive program of higher education, to meet the needs of all students, and to address local, regional and state needs and goals; and

Whereas the State University is directed to exercise care to develop and maintain a balance of its human and physical resources in meeting its obligation to provide undergraduate education that reflects the opportunity for individual choice and the needs of society, and promotes appropriate program

articulation between its State-operated institutions and community colleges; and

Whereas by Resolution 98-241, adopted on December 15, 1998, the SUNY Board of Trustees established a SUNY General Education Requirement for all baccalaureate students; and

Whereas by Resolution 2010-006, adopted on January 19, 2010, the SUNY Board of Trustees enhanced flexibility in the SUNY General Education Requirement; and

Whereas by Resolution 2012-089, adopted on December 17, 2012, the SUNY Board of Trustees included each curriculum leading to an A.A. and A.S. degree in the SUNY General Education Requirement (SUNY GER); and

Whereas in May 2017, the SUNY Provost convened a broadly representative advisory group, to determine if the SUNY GER needed review, and that group recommended moving forward with such review and offered initial suggestions for a three-phase process; and

Whereas Phase I of the SUNY GER review was co-led by the presidents of the University Faculty Senate and Faculty Council of Community Colleges, charged with conducting an environmental scan of national, state, and system models of general education, and accreditation requirements, producing research papers that reported on the general context and made recommendations for consideration in the revision process; and

Whereas Phase II was led by the SUNY Provost who empaneled the General Education Advisory Committee, broadly representative and co-chaired by a SUNY Chief Academic Officer and a SUNY Distinguished Faculty Professor, charged with developing initial recommendations for a general education framework in the context of a proposed policy revision, informed by the faculty governance-led work in Phase I; and

Whereas the General Education Advisory Committee's initial recommendations for a SUNY General Education Framework was distributed for System-wide comment, and extensive feedback was received and then analyzed in collaboration with faculty governance leaders and other experts, to inform

refinements and final recommendations to the SUNY Provost;
and

Whereas the current SUNY General Education Requirement does not include A.A.S. and A.O.S. degrees; does not align fully with Middle States accreditation standards or NYS Commissioner's regulations, does not address Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice, and is outdated in other ways; and

Whereas the SUNY Board of Trustees has elevated the importance of diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice in SUNY by creating a standing Board Committee, and the Chancellor has made it a top priority for all campuses, faculty, staff, and students by initiating the 25-point Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Action Plan that includes general education; and

Whereas the proposed SUNY General Education Framework aligns with the Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation Standards for general education and New York State Education Department liberal arts and sciences requirements for degrees; and

Whereas the proposed SUNY General Education Framework's updated knowledge, skills, and core competencies are necessitated by increasingly rapid change in academia, business, and social discourse; and

Whereas the proposed SUNY General Education Framework ensures seamless and successful transfer for SUNY students and continues to be consistent with SUNY's strategic and master plans since 1972, and is of central importance to increasing degree completion and closing New York State's degree attainment gap; and

Whereas the SUNY General Education Framework should be applicable to all SUNY undergraduate degree programs, to address the fundamental goals of higher education, including proficiency in essential skills, familiarization with disciplinary and interdisciplinary ways of knowing, and enhancement of the values and disposition of an engaged 21st century global citizenry; now, therefore, be it

Resolved that the Board of Trustees recognizes the broadly representative individuals who participated in the research and design phases of the general education framework process and applauds their hard work and dedication; and, be it further

Resolved that the Chancellor or designee be, and hereby is, directed to implement the new SUNY General Education Framework (Phase III), which includes the updated knowledge and skills categories of Communication – written and oral; Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice; Mathematics (and quantitative reasoning); Natural Sciences (and scientific reasoning); Humanities; Social Sciences; the Arts; US History and Civic Engagement; World History and Global Awareness; and World Languages; as well as the Core Competencies of Critical Thinking and Reasoning; and Information Literacy (see Attachment A); and be it further

Resolved that the SUNY Provost develop additional guidance and procedures for implementation in consultation with college presidents, chief academic officers, the University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the SUNY Student Assembly, and other appropriate stakeholders, effective fall 2023 for new students entering A.A., A.S., and all baccalaureate degree programs, and no later than fall 2024 for new students entering A.A.S. and A.O.S. degree programs; and, be it further

Resolved that SUNY System Administration will work with campuses to ensure that faculty have the training and resources to support the teaching and learning needs in the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Social Justice category; and, be it further

Resolved that consistent with the SUNY Assessment policy (Trustees Resolution 2010-039), each campus' regular assessment of its general education curriculum (or curricula) shall include the assessment of student learning in terms of the student learning outcomes associated with the SUNY General Education Framework, such that the assessment meets or exceeds Middle States' expectations and the results are used to improve teaching and learning; and, be it further

Resolved that the Chancellor, or designee, be, and hereby is, directed to assess periodically the SUNY General Education Framework, in consultation with presidents, chief academic

officers, the University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the SUNY Student Assembly, and other appropriate stakeholders, to ensure it remains relevant to changing conditions and the needs of students and businesses; and provide periodic reports of such activity to the SUNY Board of Trustees.

Background

I. SUNY General Education Requirement History

The SUNY Board of Trustees established a 30-credit SUNY General Education Requirement (SUNY GER) for all baccalaureate students, including ten required academic areas and two required competency areas, by adopting Resolution 98-241 on December 15, 1998. The purpose was to provide an intellectual foundation, ensure curricular depth, and encourage academic exploration across disciplines.

On January 19, 2010, the Board enhanced flexibility in the SUNY General Education Requirement by adopting Resolution 2010-006. This maintained the required 30-credits but reduced the number of required academic areas from ten to seven, with mathematics and basic communication required, as well as at least five of the following eight academic areas: natural science, social science, American history, Western Civilization, Other World Civilizations, humanities, the arts, and foreign languages. This enabled students to take multiple courses in some academic areas.

Consistent with SUNY's long-standing commitment to transfer student success and because A.A. and A.S. programs are designed as transfer degrees, in 2012 the Board added those degrees to the current SUNY General Education Requirement by adopting Resolution 2012-089. Thereby, each curriculum leading to an A.A., A.S., and bachelor's degree shall enable students to complete seven of ten SUNY General Education Requirement academic areas (including mathematics and basic communication), two competency areas, and 30 credits of SUNY General Education courses. These requirements are to be completed in the first two years of full-time study (or 60 credits, whichever is greater), so that associate degree students make progress equal to baccalaureate students.

II. SUNY General Education Requirement Revision Process

Recognizing that the SUNY General Education Requirement included outdated language was out of alignment with accreditation requirements in that it did not include some degrees, and that some campuses were revising their local requirements, the SUNY Provost convened a shared governance advisory group, comprised of 12 University Faculty Senate, the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, the SUNY Student Assembly governance representatives; six SUNY

provosts, three System administrators, and a Distinguished Academy member, to a one-day SUNY General Education Requirement Retreat on 5/23/17, to consider whether SUNY GER needed to be revised. The broadly representative participants at this pre-planning retreat advised that it was time to revisit the SUNY General Education Requirement and offered suggestions for a three-phase comprehensive review process and initial guiding principles.

Phase I of the SUNY GER review was led by the presidents of the University Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges. This working group was composed predominately of faculty selected by the co-chairs and charged with the analysis of national, system, accreditation, and SUNY campus models of general education. After two years of study, the working group produced a White Paper that reported on the larger issues and a Green Paper that made recommendations; and

Phase II was led by the SUNY Provost's General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC), co-chaired by a Chief Academic Officer and a Distinguished Teaching Professor, comprised of ten faculty members and a broad representation of other impacted stakeholders, charged with developing initial recommendations for a general education framework in the context of a proposed policy revision (see Attachment B). Informed by the faculty-governance work from Phase 1, the full membership of GEAC reviewed its subcommittee work and prepared a draft General Education Framework which the Provost disseminated throughout the SUNY System, resulting in robust campus feedback. Working collaboratively with faculty governance leaders and other experts, the Provost's team analyzed the voluminous feedback to refine the Framework for the Provost's consideration. On September 8, 2021, Provost-in-Charge Sandvik distributed the refined SUNY General Education Framework and draft guidance, and invited campus feedback on draft implementation guidance.

Phase III is implementation of the new SUNY General Education Framework (Attachment A). The Phase III implementation plan was adjusted to its current state after consultation with the Faculty Council of Community Colleges, and aligning the implementation process with their resolution. Through local shared governance processes, campuses shall implement the SUNY General Education framework in accordance with all applicable SUNY policies, Middle States Commission on Higher Education accreditation standards, and New York State Education Department regulations and procedures. SUNY System Administration will publish implementation guidance in the form of a Provost's Memorandum to Presidents. Campuses shall refer to these guidelines, which will establish the consistency needed to ensure seamless transfer, while allowing the flexibility for campuses to meet the needs of their students. SUNY Provost Office staff will provide ongoing guidance and continuing oversight of general education policy implementation.

Attachment A. SUNY General Education Framework

Attachment B. Provost's General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC)
Charge, and Committee and Subcommittee Composition