

GENERAL EDUCATION ACT: Bill Summary

What Is the General Education Act?

The model General Education Act (GEA) proposes a thorough reform of the failed system of cafeteria-style distribution requirements geared toward faculty research specialties rather than the true requisites of liberal education. GEA creates a new, independent School of General Education at a chosen public university, which then assumes responsibility for most general-education courses.

GEA specifies that the general-education requirements at the selected university will consist of a core curriculum of 13 courses comprising 42 semester hours. GEA finally states that the university may add no further general-education requirements (other than foreign language).

GEA proposes a content-rich curriculum to help students build a broad and coherent worldview and restores a common civic education to the center of American public-university education.

The Act's 13 general-education course requirements are as follows:

- Rhetoric and English Composition (3 credit hours)
- Mathematics Required Course: Precalculus, Mathematical Logic, Probability, Introduction to Statistics, *or* Calculus I (3 credit hours)
- Laboratory Science Required Course: Introduction to Biology, Introduction to Chemistry, *or* Introduction to Physics (4 credit hours)
- Western History I, 3000 B.C.-1450 A.D. (3 credit hours)
- Western History II, 1450 to 2000 A.D. (3 credit hours)
- United States History I, 1607-1877 (3 credit hours)
- United States Government (3 credit hours)
- United States Literature I, 1607-1914 (3 credit hours)
- Introduction to Economics (3 credit hours)
- A choice of one of the following courses (3 credit hours):
 - Founding Ideas of Western Liberty,
 - Founding Traditions of Western Art, *or*
 - Founding Ideas of Western Economics
- Western Humanities I, 1000 B.C.-1450 A.D. (4 credit hours)
- Western Humanities II, 1450-1950 A.D. (4 credit hours)
- World Civilizations (3 credit hours)

Students cannot study every interesting subject in college. Decisions must be made about which subject matter is the most fundamental for a liberal education. Such decisions inevitably involve consideration of values. The public, through its representatives, rightly can and should determine general-education requirements.

How Is the GEA Different?

American universities have abandoned traditional general-education requirements that gave students shared knowledge of the history, ideals, and institutions of America and the West, as well as a proper introduction to science, mathematics, and composition. They have substituted distribution requirements, which students can choose to satisfy from a cafeteria menu of courses. These course options are often shallow, narrow, or ideological.

For example, At the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, students can satisfy their six-credit “Humanities & the Arts” requirement by selecting courses such as:

- “Constructing Race in America”
- “Introduction to Fashion”
- “Gender & Sexuality in Greco-Roman Antiquity”
- “Zen”
- “Intro to Popular TV & Movies”
- “Viking Mythology”

The cafeteria model of general education also fails to give students much-needed direction and guidance. With hundreds of options to choose from, students are free to customize a course of study based on their whims and passing interests.

Students at UNC-Chapel Hill, for example, have over three hundred courses to choose from to fulfill their “Engagement with the Human Past” general-education requirement (this number increases to nearly 500 when cross-listed courses are included). Students deserve more meaningful guidance.

GEA renews a robust liberal arts education that reaffirms universities’ vital role to prepare students for careers and to sustain American flourishing as citizens.

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