

To: All SMCCCD Academic Senate Presidents, Curriculum Chairs, DCC Members, and Faculty
From: Jessica Hurless, District Curriculum Committee Chair
Date: February 8, 2024
RE: Changes to Lifelong Learning/Lifelong Understanding/Self-Development/Career Development/Kinesiology Associate Degree General Education Area

MEMO CONTEXT:

As a result of the development of a new singular general education pattern known as CalGETC, the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) proposed [revisions to Title 5 Regulations](#) relating to Associate Degree Requirements (Section 55060). On November 16, 2023, these revisions were signed into law meaning all California Community Colleges need to take action to ensure they are in compliance with the regulations by Fall 2025.

One of the most significant changes to the Title 5 Regulations is in Section 55061 Associate Degree Course Requirements (b)(2)(c) where it outlines the following general education areas:

(1) English Composition, Oral Communication, and Critical Thinking (minimum of 6 units) including:

(A) English Composition (minimum of 3 units)

(B) Oral Communication and Critical Thinking (minimum of 3 units)

(2) Mathematical Concepts and Quantitative Reasoning (minimum of 3 units)

(3) Arts and Humanities (minimum of 3 units)

(4) Social and Behavioral Sciences (minimum of 3 units)

(5) Natural Sciences (minimum of 3 units)

(6) Ethnic Studies (minimum of 3 units)

While these may appear similar to some of the colleges' current local associate degree requirements, you will notice that the general education pattern does not include a "Self-Development" area, which would include Lifelong Learning, Lifelong Understanding, Self-Development, Career Development, and Kinesiology courses. *For the rest of the document, I will refer to this area, for simplicity, as "Self-Development," but please know it includes all of the above areas.* As a result, all three SMCCCD colleges will need to make a decision how they will handle the removal of this area from the Associate Degree General Education pattern.

As District Curriculum Chair, I feel a sense of urgency for the San Mateo County Community College District faculty, staff, and administration engage in discussion and decision-making to ensure we are ready for Fall 2025. As such, I would like to take the opportunity to not only outline the options we have, but also explain why I think it is critical that all three campuses agree in how they will handle this area.

WHY THE LIFELONG LEARNING/UNDERSTANDING/SELF-DEVELOPMENT AREA IS NEEDED:

When you read the mission, vision, and value statements across the district, they all speak to the importance of supporting students in their academic and personal growth. As open-

enrollment institutions, this requires us to support all students' well-being both physical and mental. From my perspective, this translates into a responsibility to help students learn how to advocate for what they need to care for themselves. This is what the courses in our local associate degree Self-Development areas teach; making them invaluable.

OPTIONS:

California Community Colleges have three different options they can consider:

1. Remove the "Self-Development" GE area.
2. Add "Self-Development" as Area 7 in the Associate Degree General Education pattern.
3. Add "Self-Development" as a graduation requirement.

Option 1: Remove the "Self-Development" GE Area

As District Curriculum Chair, I would not recommend this option as it would mean courses currently listed in this area, unless approved to meet other general education areas, would lose general education status. This might impact enrollment in the courses as most students focus on taking only required courses. Low enrolled courses would be moved to inactivation/deletion status.

Option 2: Add "Self-Development" as Area 7 in the Associate Degree General Education Pattern

This option is basically status quo. At all three colleges, there is a general education area (in our local associate degrees) designated for "Self-Development." If all three colleges agree, we would add Area 7 "Self-Development" to the mandated general education areas 1-6. It is important to understand that as the updated Title 5 regulations are written, students are able to take the CalGETC pattern to meet local general education requirements.

Advantages

1. It assures that all AA/AS Associate Degree earners would have the opportunity to benefit from the instruction provided by Area 7 courses.
2. It would be clearer for students to understand a general education area than a graduation requirement.

Challenges

1. It is more restricted, such that courses approved to meet the area would be required to meet a specified unit threshold.
2. Students having the option of two different GE patterns with different areas to complete (ie. CalGETC areas 1-6; Local GE areas 1-7) may lead to some confusion.
3. If CalGETC adds another GE area in the future, we will need to recategorize all of these courses to align.

Option 3: Add "Self-Development" as a Graduation Requirement

If a student is graduating with a local Associate of Arts (AA) or Associate of Science (AS) degree, they have to complete graduation requirements. For example, residency requirements, GPA

requirements, math competency, information literacy, etc. Currently, Canada College and Skyline College have a “physical education” graduation requirement of two activity courses. A final option would be to move the “Self-Development” area, and thus courses, to a graduation requirement. This means AA and AS students would have to complete a certain number of units or courses in this area before graduating (students in an AA-T, AS-T, or certificate program would be excluded from the requirement).

Advantages

1. This allows us to stay in alignment with the CalGETC General Education areas.
2. It leaves the general education pattern open in case additional CalGETC areas are added in the future. (ie. If we have an area 7 set aside for “Self-Development” and CalGETC decides to add another GE area it would also be numbered 7, so we would have to make significant changes requiring more work)
3. It allows us to define the area and determine the number of units or courses a student would need to take, versus having the unit threshold specified in a GE Area.
4. It would allow us the option to keep “Self-Development” separate from the Physical Activity requirement – thus addressing the whole student.

Challenges

1. The concept of “graduation requirements” might be less clear to students.
2. Students might get all general education areas complete and not realize that they have to also complete graduation requirements, which could impact student progress.
3. We would need to clearly define the requirement, so if students are transferring in coursework we would know if they had already met the graduation requirement.
4. Students having the option of two different GE patterns with different areas to complete (ie. CalGETC areas 1-6; Local GE 1-6 + graduation requirements) may lead to some confusion.

STATEWIDE DATA:

To help inform institutional conversations, the articulation officers sent out a statewide survey in December 2023 asking for feedback on what colleges were planning on doing with their Physical Education/Lifelong Learning areas. Sixty different community colleges responded and 36 currently had it as a general education requirement, 16 had it as a graduation requirement, and 8 didn’t have it. Of those institutions that had it as a general education area, 27 reported that they are still discussing what they will do considering the new Title 5 Regulations and CalGETC implementation. Of the 8 colleges that reported they will keep the general education requirement; this is how some of them plan to handle it:

1. Two colleges will keep it as a stand-alone Kinesiology requirement (which sounds like a graduation requirement to me).
2. One college is planning to make it a new Area 7 requirement.
3. Two colleges are planning to have different AA and AS general education requirements and include different versions of it (due to high unit degrees in AS degrees).

4. One college has incorporated it into their local GE pattern bringing the total required units to 27 (when Title 5 Regulations only require 21 units).

Sixteen community colleges currently have it as a graduation requirement. Of these 16 colleges, 10 are still discussing and 6 are definitely keeping it as a graduation requirement. Those colleges still in discussion are examining changing the unit values and courses that meet the requirement, but it gave me the sense they would probably keep the requirement. So, we see there is precedent for all the options, which is why San Mateo County Community College District needs to engage in conversations to determine what is right for our students.

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT TO MOVE AS A DISTRICT:

The last aspect I would like everyone to consider in their discussions is the importance of being aligned in our decisions. As [Board Policy 6.26](#) states, *“Individual courses students have taken at a particular College within the District that satisfy an area in the general education pattern, elective, statutory, and specific area requirements at one District College shall be accepted by the other District Colleges as satisfying those same requirements.”* Since we are seeing a trend where students are taking courses at multiple campuses to complete their programs of study, given this type of reciprocity, it will make it clearer, and more efficient for students, if the requirements are the same (ie. It's Area 7 or a graduation requirement at all campuses).

With legislation like [AB 928](#) and [AB 1111](#) we are seeing the CCCCO modify Title 5 Regulations to create an intentional “alignment” between requirements to provide students more clarity. I think it is advantageous for the district to follow suit, as it is students that end up getting harmed when our three colleges are out of alignment.

THE ASK:

With all of this in mind, as District Curriculum Chair, I am calling upon local and District Academic Senate leadership, local Curriculum Committee leadership, as well as any faculty, staff, and administration with disciplines in the “Self-Development” area (Lifelong Learning, Lifelong Understanding, Self-Development, Career Development, and Kinesiology) to engage in critical conversations to try and determine what option would be best for our District. The District Curriculum Committee, ultimately, would like to move towards a final decision by the end of the Spring 2024 term. This will allow us a year (2024-2025) to make curriculum and catalog modifications to support the decision and come into compliance with regulations by Fall 2025.

If you have any questions or would like resources, presentations, etc. please don't hesitate to reach out.

As always, thanks for your collaboration and support in this critical endeavor.

Jessica R. Hurless
San Mateo County Community College District Curriculum Committee Chair