



Academic Senate

4/AS/18/UEPC – Structured Exploratory Emphases (SEEs)

Resolved: That the California State University Stanislaus Academic Senate endorse the integration of a Structured Exploratory Emphases program as described in the attached.

Rationale: The General Education program is intended to help students develop foundational knowledge and skills that support and expand what is learned within the major. The SEE program can help students to focus their General Education coursework around a theme of interest. While participation in a SEE is optional, these emphases can offer several benefits to students. For those who have not yet declared a major, participating in a SEE can help students to gain insights into potential majors (and minors) that are related to these themes/areas. For those with a declared major, the SEE can help students to develop interdisciplinary knowledge of an area related or complementary to the major. All participants will benefit from the connections to classmates and the faculty, staff and students who participate in the SEE. The SEE also helps create some connection among General Education courses taken at the lower and upper division level. Further, research suggests that participation in learning cohorts like these increases student retention and progress to graduation, grade point average, sense of connection to the university, and overall satisfaction with the University experience.

As early as 1992, via Executive Order 595, the CSU recognized campus responsibility for developing and revising its GE program. Among the issues noted in the EO was “considering the organization of approved courses into a variety of “cores” or “themes,” each with a unifying rationale, among which students can choose” (II.A.2, p. 2 – now reflected in EO1100- Revised, 6.2.1.b.1). Although this has at times been viewed as sub-categories within existing GE Areas, this is also now being utilized to consider optional or mandatory topical themes that incorporate courses from among many or all GE Areas. Such thematic areas exist or are close to implementation, at seven CSU campuses (Chico, East Bay, San Francisco, Northridge, Pomona, San Bernardino, Bakersfield) and are growing in popularity across the US (table below).

Faculty at Stan State have been considering themes within General Education for over a decade. A “Give Students a Compass” grant helped to identify areas in which GE themes might be developed at both Modesto Junior College (MJC) and Stan State such that we could engage students in joint co-curricular programming and create better connections between the campuses to improve transfer and BA graduation rates. GE Themes were also viewed as potentially supporting on-campus and cross-campus faculty collaborations which could enhance teaching and learning and support faculty retention and promotion. Visits from leaders at campuses that were already developing GE themes helped provide insight into design and structural needs, and insights obtained from these visits have been incorporated in the design of the SEE program.

Although MJC encouraged consideration of the awarding of a minor at the culmination of a more structured thematic pathway through General Education, this recommendation was ultimately not supported. Via consultation with departments and programs at Stan State, concerns were raised that the awarding of such a minor might undermine enrollments in discipline-based majors and minors. Instead, the SEEs identify courses related to a theme, but do not lead to the awarding of any official degree or certificate.

The process for developing a SEE ensures that there is a description and set of learning outcomes for the theme to allow students to understand the intention of the SEE, and to assist faculty in recognizing which courses are most suited for inclusion. The process for approval of SEEs ensures that all colleges have a chance to provide feedback on the design of the SEE. Further, structural supports have been identified to best ensure the long-term viability of the SEEs collectively and individually.



Participation in SEEs requires adoption of SEE-related learning outcomes and assessment of those learning outcomes through participation by individual faculty and departments/programs.

The creation, approval, and modification process set forth for SEEs may also provide a model for approval of other pathways or affinity program which do not lead to degrees, certificates, minor, etc.

Bakersfield	Three themes – Quality of Life, Revolutionary Ideas and Innovations, Sustainability and Justice. Can obtain a minor in any of these. Themes appear mandatory, but might not be.
Cal Poly Pomona	Special “interdisciplinary general education” (IGE) option is available to first time freshmen, with 6 lower division and 2 upper division courses satisfying 32 units of the GE program. Co-curricular experiences in the arts are integrated into the program.
Cal Poly SLO	None
Channel Islands	None
Chico	Ten themes, can lead to a minor. Not required, but encouraged. Diversity Studies; Ethics, Justice and Policy Studies, Food Studies; Gender and Sexuality Studies; Global Development Studies; Great Books and Ideas; Health and Wellness Studies; International Studies; Science, Technology and Values; Sustainability Studies.
Dominguez Hills	None
East Bay	Thematic “GE Clusters” that serve as learning communities – 14 clusters that are available for any major, but also specific clusters for 12 majors (primarily science-related majors). Clusters are mandatory. Includes Ancient World, Earth Crisis!, How Things Work, Humans in the Natural World, Individual and Society, Language and Culture, Moving Bodies/Shifting Identities and Social Justice, Science in the Ancient World, Science Behind the Music, Spirituality Creativity and the Human Experience, Taking Charge of Your Life – Balance, Thinking Globally, Viewing Diversity, World Problems. These are for the first year only.
Fresno	None
Fullerton	None
Humboldt	None
Long Beach	None
Los Angeles	None
Maritime	None
Monterey Bay	None
Northridge	GE Paths – optional. Arts, Media and Culture; Global Studies; Health and Wellness; Principles of Sustainability; Social Justice; Scientific Reasoning.
Sacramento	None but an optional Certificate in Global and Multicultural Perspectives within GE (9 units must be upper division)
San Bernardino	GE Pathways in development, it appears – optional, and can lead to an optional minor (some require some non-GE coursework to complete the minor requirements). Courses within a specific pathway, and student course-taking choices, are highly regulated (must include 4-6 GE categories, students can only take 2 courses from a single dept within the pathway, and only 3 within a college, must include 2 upper division courses and 1 writing designated course, etc). Global Connections; Social Justice; Environmental Sustainability; Digital Life;



	World Culture and Diversity; Revolutionary Ideas that Changed the World; Who has the right to eat? Food Science, Society and Security.
San Diego State	None
San Francisco	Developed "Metro Academies" tied to majors/fields with thematic emphases (community health, science for the public good, education equity and social justice) within the General Education program, pairing a GE course and Metro course each term for four semesters. Fields include Business, Child and Adolescent Development, Computer Science and Engineering, Education, Ethnic Studies, Health, Liberal and Creative Arts, and Science.
San Jose	None
Sonoma	None
Stanislaus	TBD

Approved by the Academic Senate on February 13, 2018

Approved by President Ellen Junn on March 22, 2018