



collin county community college district  
institutional research office  
M E M O R A N D U M

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WE FACILITATE PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND EVALUATION TO HELP PEOPLE ACHIEVE THE DISTRICT'S MISSION

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To:

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From: Tom Martin

Date: July 18, 2001

RE: General Education Outcomes (GEO) Forum Preparation Materials

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I extend my appreciation to you for accepting Dr. Kappus' invitation to serve on the GEO Forum. I have been asked to serve as co-chair of this group along with Pam Gaiter. We have an important task and we need to proceed quickly. You were invited to participate in this group because you have demonstrated commitment to excellence, commitment to effective general education, outstanding work ethic, intelligence, and an ability to carefully consider issues from a variety of perspectives. I look forward to working with you over the next year.

At CCCCD, we have never engaged in formal ongoing evaluation of our general education despite the fact that doing so is a requirement of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). Thus, the primary task of this group is to design an effective process for regularly evaluating CCCCD's program of general education and to work with deans and Dr. Kappus to implement the process. Our task is crucial to (1) CCCCD's ability to document its effectiveness related to a major component of the District's mission and (2) the institution's ability to demonstrate to SACS that CCCCD effectively provides students with broad educational preparation for further undergraduate study and preparation meaningful participation in society.

Accompanying this memo is a packet of material to help you prepare for our task. Please read and study the materials carefully prior to our first meeting so everyone will be up to speed when we begin our discussions. The following five items are included in your packets.

(1) A book entitled *General Education Assessment for Improvement of Student Academic Achievement: Guidance for Academic Departments and Committees*.

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- (2) A photocopy of a 1999 article from the *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* entitled "General Education in Community Collges" A Time for Reexamination." The article provides some useful background on how community colleges around the nation are evaluating their general education programs.
- (3) A brochure from the Assessment Resource Center at the University of Missouri describing "College BASE" ("Basic Academic Subjects Examination"), a standardized instrument for assessing general education outcomes.
- (4) A brochure from ACT describing "CAAP" ("Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency"), another standardized instrument for assessing general education outcomes.
- (5) A folder from ETS describing "The Academic Profile," a third standardized instrument for assessing general education outcomes.

I anticipate envision our timeline proceeding roughly as follows:

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| From Now until Faculty Return for the Fall                      | All GEO Forum Members: Read and study the information in your packets.<br>Tom and Pam: Plan agenda for the GEO Forum's initial meeting. |
| The Week When Faculty Return for the Fall<br>Fall Semester 2001 | Hold GEO Forum's initial meeting.<br>Design a process for regularly evaluating CCCC'D's general education program.                      |
| Spring Semester 2002  | Work with Dr. Kappus and the instructional deans to implement the process designed during fall semester.                                |

You need to think about two issues as you prepare for our first meeting. SACS has been very clear about the need to evaluate general education, but has bent over backwards not to define general education or tell institutions how to evaluate it. I believe the reason for SACS' reluctance stems from the notion that it should be up to institutions to define general education for themselves and to determine the most appropriate ways to evaluate it. Thus, the two issues below will provide the focus for our work over the next year.

First Issue: What does general education mean at CCCC'D and in our local, state, and national cultures. For us, what is general education? What is its purpose? What are its components? What do we mean when we say our students have been "broadly educated?" What do we expect students to know or do once they have been "broadly educated" by our faculty?

Second Issue: How can we tell whether or not we have accomplished the purposes of general education at CCCC'D once a student has been "broadly educated?"

Again, I look forward to working with you. Let me know if you have any questions. Pam and I will be in touch.