

MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 8, 2017

TO: Dylan Rodriguez, Chair
Riverside Division of Academic Senate

FROM: Jean Helwege, Chair
School of Business Executive Committee

Re: Breadth Requirement Proposal: Gender Studies

The Executive Committee of the School of Business has reviewed the revised proposal for a Gender Studies Breadth Requirement. The committee was not unanimous in its views but the majority of the members were not in favor of the proposal. Only one member voted to approve the proposal as it stands. All members of the committee could see the value of allowing gender studies courses to serve as a breadth option, but most were against the idea of forcing students to take these courses in order to graduate. In particular, the view was expressed that adding required courses to the curriculum one at a time has a large impact in the long run despite the fact that no effort is ever made to consider the value of the entire educational experience.

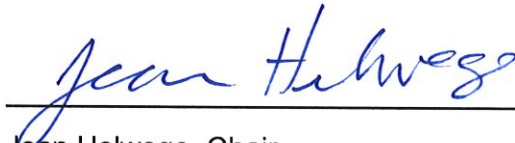
A more specific reason for disapproval is the concern that students will be forced to take general education requirements that prevent them from taking valuable courses in their major. Students often hit the unit cap at UCR and in their efforts to graduate "on time" they often take the minimum number of credits in their major. By reducing the focus on the skills and knowledge that students come to UCR to learn, required breadth courses limit the students' job opportunities and their understanding of the careers they intend to pursue. Furthermore, these requirements are likely to delay graduation. The Committee notes that the list of courses allowed for the requirement is very long, but many of the courses are at the 100 level and have pre-requisites. For example, the course FREN 152 Food and French Literature is available as a gender requirement course. It is taught in French and has FREN 101A as a pre-requisite. To take FREN 101A, a student must have already taken FREN 001, 002, 003 015A and 015B. When one considers the list of courses that have no pre-requisites the list is much shorter.

The fact that the proposal requires students to take a different course than the one used to satisfy the ethnic studies course is also a major concern. There are many topics raised in the proposal

that would be addressed in courses that meet the ethnic studies requirement and in fact would shed light on both topics in a very effective way.

It is also not clear that the courses listed, many of which are seminar courses designed for groups of less than 50, would work as lectures with hundreds of students. By making these courses required for all 18,000 undergraduates, a few departments will end up teaching thousands of students each year. It is likely to put a strain on limited resources, which surely reduces the effectiveness of the requirement.

Some members of the committee questioned whether the courses really served the stated purpose. The proposal states that the courses that fulfill the requirement must focus on gender differences or sexualities, but many of the listed courses have a different focus and are unlikely to serve the main goal of the proposal. For example, CPLT 132 Rousseau and Revolution states "topics include social inequality, slavery, gender, subjectivity, violence and political rights." Except for inserting the word gender into a long list of items to be covered in a 10-week course, there is little in the course that would help students at UCR fight the "culture of rape" or mitigate the problem of "UC campuses as often hostile or unsafe environments for women students." One member argued that the proposal seems to be a form of indoctrination of political views, which is explicitly prohibited by California law.



Jean Helwege, Chair

School of Business Executive Committee