

NORTHERN ESSEX COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Program Review Year 2012 – 2013

Name of Program:

General Studies

Program Review Team Members

Name

Title

Stephen Mathis	Professor, English Dept.
Tom Greene	Associate Professor, English Dept.
Patricia Machado	Professor, Global Studies
Stephen Russell	Professor, Global Studies
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DATE: January 2014

SECTION XIII: SUMMARY – PROGRAM STRENGTHS

A. List and describe the program’s major strengths, as detailed at the end of each section of this review, or in the program’s external report (accreditation, approval, or certification).

SECTION	AREA OF STRENGTH
I	
II	The program offers a meaningful associate degree option for students who change majors at the college or who may be undecided in a career field when they enter the college.
III	Flexible open curriculum that keeps a core of general education classes along with the large number of elective credits.
IV	Extremely flexible elective options.
V	
VI	
VII	The program is open to all students at each of the college’s campuses.
VIII	
IX	
X	
XI	
XII	

SECTION XIV: SUMMARY – PROGRAM CHALLENGES AND AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT – ACTION PLANS

A. List and describe the program’s major challenges and areas for improvement detailed at the end of each section of this review, or. For each challenge, describe the action recommendation, as well as the individuals responsible for implementation.

SECTION	CHALLENGE - AREA FOR IMPROVEMENT	ACTION RECOMMENDATION – INDIVIDUAL(S) RESPONSIBLE
I		
II	Revising the General Studies mission statement to de-emphasize transfer and instead focus on what a student will achieve by completing this degree. (already done above in section I. A.)	Program review team. Already done.
III	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore the “opt-in versus opt-out” relationship between General Studies and Liberal Arts for entering students who would otherwise be undeclared or undecided. It might make sense to find ways to encourage more entering students to pursue the Liberal Arts option, saving General Studies for students who change majors at NECC. 2. Explore the possibility of having students entering the General Studies program be required to take the College Success seminar, provided that this seminar directly addresses informed, rational/realistic goal setting and academic planning based on those goals. 3. Actively provide better key information to students in the program at key points: when they enter the program and at the end of their first and second semesters. This information should highlight the benefits of the program, transfer policies and the program’s differences with the Liberal Arts program 	Academic Advising. Program Chair, if the program has one.
IV	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Changes to the curricular structure of the program would defeat the very useful purpose of the program to facilitate graduation for students who change majors at NECC but who still intend to graduate with an associate degree but who may not intend to transfer. 	Academic Advising. Program Chair, if the program has one.

	<p>2. Identify program outcomes and criteria – what will students know and what will they be able to do as a result of completing this program – that are distinct from the Liberal Arts outcomes.</p>	
V		
VI	<p>Provide a course release or stipend for a chair position and a budget for advising and advising related events.</p>	Academic Affairs
VII	<p>No program specific policies or procedures to ensure students graduate or transfer in a timely manner. Especially for a “major” that is so vague, in other words, not having a specific focus or direction, General Studies students need more focused advising throughout their program.</p> <p>Recommendations for actions needed to be taken to deal with Challenges or Areas for Improvement:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Examine entry advising procedures to ensure that students who intend to transfer, especially to another state institution. This could include both individual counseling as well as larger audience events where the mysteries surrounding the differences between the Liberal Arts and General Studies programs are explained, and financial aid and the Mass Transfer Compact is clarified. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure that students understand the differences between the Liberal Arts and General Studies major. Especially now with different math and science paths to graduation, these courses should no longer be considered insurmountable obstacles to graduation with a Liberal Arts degree. b. Ensure that students understand the state’s Transfer Compact, and its implications for choosing classes while enrolled at NECC. 2. Although the stated purpose of the General Studies program is to offer students curricular 	Academic Advising. Program Chair, if the program has one.

	<p>flexibility to explore different majors and career options, this flexibility appears to impede first-time students from graduating from the program. Therefore, we recommend that entering students, especially during their first year, be counseled away from taking elective classes as a way to explore careers and majors, and instead, focus on completing their general education and Mass Transfer requirements. Too many general studies students waste precious credits and limited financial aid dollars by exploring and taking classes that ultimately do not count towards a degree or certificate.</p> <p>3. The first thirty credits. For all practical purposes, the first thirty credits of both the Liberal Arts program and the General Studies program are identical (it's only ten general education classes, as long as the student doesn't pursue a bunch of electives during the first year, which is a horrible idea!). For students in the General Education program, once they have completed thirty credits, they should again meet with an advisor to discuss transfer and switching to the Liberal Arts major, or, another major. Since students who intend to transfer to a state-four year institution should be following the course sequence outlined by the Mass Transfer compact and the Liberal Arts program, General Studies students with more than thirty credits who intend to transfer should be made to seriously consider switching the Liberal Arts program so that they graduate and that all of their classes from NECC transfer.</p>	
VIII		
IX	Perhaps develop outcomes for the program that differentiate it from the Liberal Arts program. This would require additional curricular requirements for the program, perhaps including an additional class or assessment.	Academic Advising. Program Chair, if the program has one
X		

XI		
XII		

SECTION XV: RESOURCES REQUESTED

If any specific resource needs were identified in this program review, and included in SECTION XIV Action Plan(s), please list these resources below, indicating for each whether the type of resource needed is Equipment, Personnel, space, or Other. If applicable and known, provide vendor and estimated cost information.

SECTION	RESOURCE NEED	TYPE OF RESOURCE	VENDOR/ ESTIMATED COST
III & VII	Additional Advising resources	Time	
VI	Program Coordinator or Chair	Stipend or reassigned time.	