



January 5, 2015

To: Jose Wudka, Chair
Riverside Division

From: Ken Baerenklau, Chair 
Committee on Educational Policy

Re: Student Proposal for a Gender Studies Breadth Requirement

CEP reviewed the proposal for a gender studies breadth requirement at its meeting on December 5. Committee members generally feel that there are compelling reasons to give careful consideration to implementing a gender studies breadth requirement. The proposal presents some of these reasons, both from a broader cultural perspective and from a narrower campus perspective. Such a requirement also would be consistent with UCR's mission and reputation, and with what we believe to be one of our comparative advantages—diversity, broadly construed—that we frequently emphasize as a defining characteristic and key strength of our campus. CEP believes that UCR should continue to be a leader on these issues.

Some recent developments also suggest that the time is right to consider such a breadth requirement. In September, Governor Brown approved SB 967 (the "yes means yes" law) that requires the UC Regents, and other university governing boards, to adopt stricter sexual assault policies in order to continue receiving state funds for student financial assistance. Among other things, SB 967 requires "a comprehensive prevention program [consisting] of a range of prevention strategies." "Awareness raising campaigns" are listed as a possible component of these strategies; thus a gender studies breadth requirement could contribute to the university's effort to comply with the law. In November, coincidentally or not, the UCLA Academic Senate approved a new diversity requirement: UCLA undergraduates must take a course on ethnic, cultural, religious or gender diversity. UCR's analogous requirement, which has been in place for many years, covers only ethnic diversity.

While CEP is generally, though not unanimously, supportive of the idea of adding a gender studies breadth requirement, committee members raised many questions and concerns about how such a requirement should be implemented. These include the following:

- The Senate should clearly articulate the purpose of the requirement and the corresponding criteria that qualifying courses must satisfy. For example, ethnicity courses must be "comparative in nature."
- The list of courses provided in the proposal is probably too long and likely includes courses with only marginal treatments of gender issues and thus dubious value in service of a gender studies breadth requirement. If so, what would be the enrollment impacts on a smaller set of qualified

courses that satisfy a more focused set of criteria, and on the programs that offer those courses? What would be the impact on time to degree? What can we learn about these things from the implementation of the ethnicity requirement?

- Should each college be allowed to select its own list of qualified courses, as appears to be the case for the ethnicity requirement?
- Should a gender studies breadth course be allowed to satisfy another breadth requirement, as is the case for the ethnicity courses?
- Should a separate gender studies breadth requirement be created, or should the existing “ethnicity” requirement be expanded into a “diversity” requirement? What would be the enrollment impacts of alternative arrangements?
- Direct approaches such as required training for faculty, staff, and students are better suited to address acute issues and may even be necessary to comply with SB 967. Incorporating gender studies into the core curriculum could complement these efforts but would produce a different, more diffuse, but potentially important benefit for students and society.
- Formalization of a societal issue into the curriculum should not be taken lightly. Debate and perspective are valuable but care should be taken to avoid injecting advocacy on any issue into the curriculum.

CEP suggests that an ad hoc senate committee should be tasked with examining these and other issues in detail, recommending for or against instituting a gender studies breadth requirement, and developing a specific proposal for such a requirement, if desired.