

# SUNY-ESF RESOLUTION

## On General Education Assessment

WHEREAS the SUNY Board of Trustees voted to pursue a standardized system-wide assessment of general education in June 2003; and

WHEREAS the purpose of general education assessment has been understood to be an evaluation of a campus' programs, not an assessment of individual students; and

WHEREAS it is our belief that assessment needs to be a campus-based activity for the following reasons:

- Such a standardized system-wide assessment would interfere explicitly with the fundamental academic freedom of instructors in discussing their subject, an important element of higher education in a democracy.
- A standardized system-wide assessment would appear to presuppose a system-wide curriculum, which would tend to undermine the rigor and comprehensive nature of each campus' General Education Program.
- The College of Environmental Science and Forestry created a General Education Assessment Plan mandated by SUNY System Administration which was approved by ESF's Faculty Governance in May 2002 and approved by SUNY GEAR under the auspices of SUNY Central Administration's Provost's office, and which is currently in its first year of a three-year cycle of implementation.
- SUNY-ESF adopted the SUNY Learning Outcomes and *Guidelines for the Approval of State University General Education Requirement Courses* and in addition developed for our campus a more in-depth set of learning objectives.
- The logistics of such testing would appear to be insurmountable, given that general education occurs throughout each student's undergraduate tenure, with students following numerous individual routes in choosing from the intellectually rich diversity that is appropriate to a university education; and given that general education requirements can be met through coursework taken at other institutions, including high schools and study abroad programs, making an examination given at one campus an evaluation not only of that campus but of many other teaching and learning environments.
- Uniform system-wide standardized assessment at any point prior to the completion of the undergraduate general education experience would not reflect the accomplishments of the graduate.
- Any funds which might be spent developing such a vehicle would be better spent on enhancing individual campus-based undergraduate assessment.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT: the Faculty of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry will continue to follow the General Education Assessment Plan of its own design, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT: the Faculty of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry will not support, embrace, or voluntarily participate in any SUNY-mandated standardized General Education Assessment Plan that:

- Does not involve ESF faculty, nor facilitates ultimate ESF faculty approval, in both the design and implementation of a system-wide assessment instrument
- Utilizes a battery of "high stakes" standardized tests delivered to all SUNY students
- Establishes a linkage between campus performance in General Education as assessed using a system-wide instrument and individual SUNY campus budget allocations
- Publicly reports "raw" scores derived from a system-wide assessment instrument
- Does not consider or measure each campus' "value added" as a component in the assessment of General Education learning outcomes
- Is inadequately funded by SUNY Central Administration, or draws upon existing local campus budget resources.

*Adopted by ESF Faculty Governance on October 16, 2003*