

RESOLUTION ON SYSTEM-WIDE ASSESSMENT

University Senate of Stony Brook University

Whereas, the SUNY System Administration has required campuses to establish programs to assess their General Education curriculum; and

Whereas, the SUNY System Administration has worked cooperatively with the University Faculty Senate and the Faculty Council of Community Colleges to establish the General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) to oversee this campus-based assessment process; and

Whereas, Stony Brook has a long-established high quality General Education program (its Diversified Educational Curriculum, DEC) and has already implemented the first year of a three-year GEAR-approved assessment plan; and

Whereas, each SUNY campus is unique, having different missions, admissions standards, student populations, and routes to satisfying the SUNY General Education requirements; and

Whereas, accrediting bodies such as the Middle States Commission on Higher Education recognize the diversity of campus programs within a state system and assess the performance of the individual campuses and not the state-wide system; and

Whereas, most national experts on assessment (e.g., Dr. Barbara Cambridge, former Director of Assessment for the American Association of Higher Education, and Dr. Peter Ewell, Senior Associate of the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems) and a recent report of the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy of the California State University have argued that academic assessment is best done at the campus and not system level; and

Whereas, the use of standardized tests (or its functional equivalent, common measures) across the campuses of SUNY would undermine fundamental principles of academic excellence by discouraging pedagogical creativity and innovation while encouraging standardized education that is narrowly tailored to the standardized tests; and

Whereas, General Education occurs over a student's entire academic career, and since students take individually diverse pathways through the available educational programs, including coursework at other institutions of higher education, internships, and study abroad programs, attempting to test this diversity in a standardized manner is an academically inappropriate; and

Whereas, the costs of such a standardized program would be considerable and, in an economic environment that already restricts the ability of campuses to carry out their academic missions in a manner that most believe appropriate, any available funds should be used to support the campus-based assessment programs; and

Whereas, the Board of Trustees has offered no academically compelling reasons, evidence or problems that warrant a standardized approach to assessment; therefore

Be it resolved, that the University Senate of Stony Brook University affirms its commitment to campus-based assessment, will continue to implement its approved campus-based General Education assessment plan, and will not support, embrace or participate in any SUNY-mandated standardized assessment of General Education;

Be it further resolved, that in the best interests of the State University of New York the University Senate of Stony Brook University urges the Board of Trustees to rescind its resolution of June 17, 2003 on system-wide assessment and allow the Provost's Office and the faculty governance bodies to continue working together to construct a system of assessing foundational skills in General Education that provides both for campus autonomy and System Administration oversight.