

There have been several comments today suggesting that faculty who oppose this resolution are driven by desire to protect turf. This is a misjudgment. While there may be some anxiety about this sort of thing, the faculty who have taken the time to come and sit here for hours while they would much rather be doing other things, things they enjoy doing, are here because they care about teaching. That is the bottom line.

In my opinion, general education courses are intended to point a young person to all sorts of career and education options on the assumption that as a young person you do not know in what area you might thrive. They are intended to introduce students to a wider world and to surmount youthful prejudices over what might be interesting and worthwhile. They are also intended to enrich a student's mental life on the assumption that the student is more than a future employee but a human being.

Protecting students from unnecessary credits due to poor alignment or advisement does not require reducing general education credits across the university. By conflating these themes the resolution encourages the view that any general education above a bare minimum is an evil on a par with those unnecessary credits due to poor advisement, alignment, etc. Since the 'unnecessary' general education credits are almost certain to come from the humanities, the social sciences, and languages, the resolution appears committed to limiting student exposure to such courses. This is abandoning their college education and it is doing so by hiding behind rhetoric about fairness to students.

This resolution has another consequence. Enlarging the field of electives by diminishing general education credits almost guarantees – as a fact of human nature – that students will circle around what is most familiar, or easiest, or what they think is most prudent, however little it turns out to be.

Under the tension of the moment, some students may still feel this resolution is highly desirable – they want to get on with their lives and careers. But they ought to reflect on whether they want to pay the same tuition for less, i.e. fewer course choices, less opportunity for exposure to different disciplines, and larger classes. They ought to ask themselves who really benefits from this, and what that benefit is.