MEMORANDUM

January __, 2010

To: Members of the Board of Trustees
From: Dr. Nancy L. Zimpher, Chancellor
Subject: Amendments to General Education Requirement

I recommend that the Board of Trustees adopt the following resolution:

Resolved that Resolution 98-241, adopted by the Board of Trustees on December 12, 1998, be, and hereby is, amended, effective immediately (additions underlined, deletions in brackets), to read as follows:

Whereas the State University Board of Trustees possesses broad authority over the curriculum of its institutions under Section 355(2)(h) of the New York State Education Law; and

Whereas the Statue University Board of Trustees adopted a General Education Requirement in 1998 that has been implemented for a decade; and

Whereas the State University Board of Trustees has adopted Resolution 2009-138 to affirm and enhance previous Board resolutions to promote student mobility throughout the State University of New York system; and

Whereas the State University-wide general education requirement affects both student mobility and time-to-degree; and

Whereas the State University Board of Trustees, through its Re-Engineering SUNY initiative, requested that the University identify opportunities to streamline policies and procedures; and

Whereas the State University’s chief academic officers and faculty governance organizations agree that streamlining of General Education Requirement would have a positive impact on student mobility and time-to-degree while also maintaining academic quality; now, therefore, be it
Resolved that the Board of Trustees hereby adopts a General Education Requirement applicable to all State-operated institutions of the State University offering undergraduate degrees which shall require candidates for a [bachelors] baccalaureate degree, as a condition of graduation, to complete an academically rigorous and comprehensive core General Education curriculum of no fewer than 30 credit hours including, but not limited to, at least three credit hours each of course work to instill knowledge and skills in

[each of the ten key academic areas to include mathematics, natural science, social science, American history, Western Civilization, Other World Civilizations, humanities, the arts, foreign languages, and basic communication and overall competency in reasoning, and information management;]

mathematics and basic communication as well as at least three credits each in at least five of the following eight academic areas—natural science, social science, American history, Western Civilization, Other World Civilizations, humanities, the arts and foreign languages—and overall competency in the areas of critical thinking and information management; and be it further

Resolved that implementation of the General Education Requirement be subject to the following principles:

1. The faculty of each institution will retain the responsibility for establishing the specific course requirements and content of a General Education curriculum reflective of the best practices in American higher education. Such General Education curriculum courses shall be broad, high-quality courses that provide students with a set of non-specialized, coherent and focused educational experiences aimed at enabling students to acquire knowledge and skills that are useful and important for all educated persons regardless of their jobs or professions.

2. Individual campuses are encouraged to allow faculty to develop more than one curriculum which meets the General Education Requirement.

3. Each institution’s General Education curriculum shall complement and build on students’ foundation of secondary school or other prior
academic preparation, especially with respect to mathematics, science and foreign language.

4. Each institution shall devote sufficient resources to the General Education program to assure effective instruction and successful learning.

5. Institutions offering Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees shall design their General Education Requirement so as to facilitate the ability of such Associates degree graduates to transfer into State University baccalaureate degree programs consistent with Trustees’ Resolution [90-196, dated September 27, 1990] 2009-138, dated November 17, 2009.

6. The Provost of the State University may establish additional guidelines and procedures for implementation of these requirements as appropriate and necessary, which guidelines may permit waiver or modifications of portions of these requirements for the Specialized Colleges, Colleges of Technology, programs awarding two-year vocational degrees and for other special circumstances.

7. The requirements shall apply to students entering the State University as freshmen beginning in the fall of [2000]2010; and, be it further

Resolved that in accordance with Section 6306(2) of the State Education Law, the State University Board of Trustees urges the boards of trustees of the community colleges operating under the program of the State University to adopt General Education Requirements and curricula consistent with the aforementioned principles; and, be it further

[Resolved that the Provost of the State University will work with the leadership and faculty of the University’s campuses to develop a means for assuring that demonstrable learning in specified General Education subjects is taking place, that a campus’ implementation of General Education standards set forth in this resolution is considered in the allocation of resources to campuses and to explore ways to recognize and reward faculty who make major commitments to strengthening General Education at their campuses so as to encourage the involvement of outstanding junior and senior faculty; and, be it further]
Resolved that the Provost of the State University will work with the leadership and faculty of the State University’s campuses to implement this resolution, consistent with the Mission Review process. The Provost will advise the Board of Trustees of any additional steps that may need to be taken to insure the smooth implementation of this resolution in a fashion that enhances access and quality at the State University.

Background

In support of the University’s commitment to high academic standards, timely degree completion and student mobility, the proposed amendments to Board of Trustees’ Resolution 98-241 regarding General Education will continue to require candidates for a baccalaureate degree to complete no fewer than 30 credit hours in general education, but will change the number of subjects in which candidates must demonstrate knowledge and skills to seven of the ten key academic areas identified in Resolution 98-241.

The proposed amendments:
 continue to ensure that baccalaureate degree recipients have breadth of study in multiple subject areas;
 provide students more flexibility in selecting courses that satisfy the general education requirement as well as other degree requirements; and
 give baccalaureate degree candidates more opportunity for in-depth study in a general education subject area.

These changes will:
 facilitate transfer to baccalaureate programs for Associate of Arts or Associate of Science degree holders; and
 support timely degree completion for baccalaureate degree candidates, regardless of where they begin their study.