Against Market-Driven ‘General Education’: A Contribution to the Debate Regarding City Tech’s Implementation of Pathways

Costas Panayotakis Associate Professor of Sociology and College Council Secretary, New York City College of Technology

I. Introduction

In what follows I identify serious problems in the proposals contained in the 07-22-12 draft of “General Education at NYCCIT” (GEN for short) which was sent to the college community by Provost August on August 25, 2012. I will not rehearse here all the arguments against the ways in which Pathways waters down general education at CUNY and violates the power of faculty to determine curriculum nor will I expand on reports regarding the dysfunctional way that the implementation of Pathways by CUNY is taking place. Abstracting from these problems, which incidentally have led a majority of full-time faculty at CUNY, including many of the faculty who participated in the committees designing Pathways in the first place, to call for the repeal of Pathways altogether, I will focus instead on the way that the document in question proposes to implement Pathways at City Tech.

In my view, should Pathways survive the challenges it faces on legal grounds as well as from its internal flaws and the growing faculty opposition that these flaws understandably generate, City Tech should try to implement it with two criteria in mind:

First, it should try, through its choice of college option requirements, to reduce rather than compound the damage done by Pathways.
Second, it should try to show greater respect for the spirit of general education than the Pathways initiative does.

Without defending the claims I make about the Pathways initiative as a whole, I will instead focus on how the proposals contained in GEN, notably those regarding the proposed College Option Requirement, fail to meet these criteria. First of all, GEN and its proposals seem to neglect the importance of general education as a counterbalance to the utilitarian views of knowledge that our society fosters. Second, GEN and its proposals seem to neglect the importance of general education as an experience that encourages students to be engaged and informed citizens. These two points are related but, in what follows, I will try to develop them one at a time.

Before I do so, though, let me just say that the length of this document is due to the fact that the more I thought about the implications of GEN’s proposals, the more problems I saw. In this respect, my experience was typical of many faculty across CUNY who are discovering that the more time and energy they devote to the implementation of Pathways, the more obvious the unworkability of Pathways becomes. In any case, given the importance of general education for the educational experience of our students, I hope that the reader will not be put off by its length and persevere until the end. Indeed, it is towards the end that, to remedy the problems identified in this document, I advance a set of recommendations that would set our new general education program on a more secure basis. This document was written in response to the Provost’s request for comments on the General Education proposal, so I look forward to the General Education Committee’s response. At the same time, however, given the need for everyone in the college
community to participate in the debate regarding the future of General Education at City Tech, I am happy to share this document with the entire college community and look forward to people’s reactions.

II. Making City Tech’s General Education Market-Friendly
An important reason general education is needed as a counterbalance to narrowly utilitarian views of knowledge is that in a capitalist society the survival of the vast majority of people depends on their ability to sell their labor power in the market. This cruel reality puts great pressure on people to approach higher education as nothing but the way through which one gets the skills s/he needs to get the job on which his/her survival and that of his/her loved ones depend. The inherent instability of the capitalist system, with its booms and busts and the high levels of unemployment that it periodically generates, increases the temptation of viewing education in purely utilitarian, job-centered terms. Given the fact that we are in the midst of a serious capitalist crisis right now, which understandably magnifies this temptation even further, it is incumbent on us to continue resisting the utilitarian temptation and to insist on the fact that there is more to education than skills that will allow one to get a job.

Unfortunately the document’s proposals point in a different direction. While GEN pays lip service to the need of a general education that promotes civic engagement, social responsibility and justice, and so on, its specific proposals are more consistent with the philosophy specified in the following passage from that document:

“The General Education Committee of NYCCT proposes a philosophy for the college’s offerings in General Education that … attempts to balance breadth and depth of knowledge with the acquisition of useful skills… The goal is to produce graduates who are active learners, creative problem solvers, and engaged practitioners in their respective domains.” Useful skills, creative problem solving and engagement in the employee’s domain would be precisely the goals that any CEO would mention were he to be asked what kinds of qualities they want in an employee. A smart CEO might hasten to add that, of course, he believes in the obligation of the ‘business community’ to be socially responsible but their practice would be informed by a recognition that employees who are engaged and critically thinking citizens might think twice about defrauding mortgage consumers, giving triple-A ratings to toxic financial assets, going along with their employers’ safety and environmental violations, and so on. Employees who are engaged and critically thinking citizens might leak information to the press that exposes and embarrasses the employer in ways that cut into the company’s profit margin or they might act as whistleblowers when the employer violates the law.

That many CEOs act this way is not surprising, by the way, since they are under pressure to maximize profit. That many employees would go along with questionable ways of pursuing profit is also not surprising in view of the stick of unemployment if they try to ‘rock the boat’ and the carrot of promotion if they implement and even invent ever more creative ways of increasing corporate profit at the expense of the general public (collateralized debt obligations, anyone?) Given all these systemically induced pressures to act in anti-social ways in order to get ahead, shouldn’t the ways we change the general education requirements at City Tech aspire to do more than prepare marketable cogs who stand ready to assume their place within the capitalist machine?
The answer of GEN’s proposals to this question is a resounding No. General education is more firmly harnessed to the student’s major and thus to the needs of the market. Out of the 12 credits under the ‘College option requirement’ three are devoted to an “interdisciplinary course/seminar that links study in the major to one or more liberal arts disciplines.” It’s as if the document tries to legitimize General Education by telling the student, ‘see, liberal arts are not useless, they relate to what you have to know to get a job!’ It may seem like a clever way to make some otherwise skeptical students warm up to the liberal arts but what this move does is to advance the subordination of General Education to the principle of marketability.

It should be added here that, even though the addition of this interdisciplinary course represents a major change compared to City Tech’s general education in the past, there is precious little in the document about the rationale behind such a change. In fact, the only rationale for this change surprisingly does not appear in the ‘Rationale’ section but rather in the ‘Recommendations’ section of the document, where we read that “[t]o support the goals of integrative/interdisciplinary learning, the committee proposes to require a course that integrates concepts or skills from the major with that of one or more liberal arts areas.” According to the document ‘integration’ refers to productive work “within and across disciplines.” The way this general goal is fleshed out, however, leaves something to be desired. Some of the principles are vague, while others try to limit the meaning of integration in arbitrary ways.

Consider the principle ‘understand and navigate systems.’ Were we to make GEN the basis of the general education at City Tech, we would put our students in the position of the proverbial fellow who found out to his astonishment that he had spoken prose all his life without realizing it. Indeed, any and all of our students who successfully use the subway to move around the city would have to be informed that, without realizing it, they have shown mastery of the second principle of integrative learning in City Tech’s new General Education curriculum. On a more serious note, though, I also argue later that GEN’s proposals will, despite (or, rather, precisely because of) their market-friendly nature reduce rather than enhance our students’ understanding of the system that impinges the most on their lives and education, namely capitalism.

The principle that arbitrarily narrows the more general definition of ‘integration’ cited above calls for “meaningful and multiple connections among the liberal arts and between the liberal arts and the areas of study leading to a major or a profession.” It is this principle that presumably serves to disqualify interdisciplinary courses within the liberal arts. Notice, however, a subtle but peculiar asymmetry in the committee’s proposal. When the proposed interdisciplinary course is described as “a course that integrates concepts of skills from the major with that of one or [my emphasis] more liberal arts areas,” the committee seems to signal that some connections are more important than others. An interdisciplinary course that links the major to one liberal arts area is acceptable even though it would not establish connections “among the liberal arts” but an interdisciplinary course that establishes connections among the liberal arts but not between the liberal arts and the major is not provided for. Market-friendly connections are indispensable, less market-friendly ones, not. In reality, of course, interdisciplinary courses within the liberal arts would offer students greater exposure to areas of intellectual endeavor that differ from what they study semester after semester in their major and would be closer to the spirit of general education we should be trying to promote.
What is more, institutionalizing a general education that varies according to the student’s major is a bit of an oxymoron. As most other concepts in our language, ‘general education’ derives its meaning from what it is not, namely the more specialized education students receive when they pursue the specific requirements of their major. General education is ‘general’ to the extent that it provides skills that add to the educational experience of students, no matter what their specific major is. Every student can benefit from it because they serve broad values other than marketability – they help students become engaged and critically thinking citizens, more rounded human beings, and so on. With GEN’s proposals, we are faced with the scenario of courses that would count as ‘general education’ for one major but not for any other. Apparently, our general education committee has neglected the obvious fact that students benefit from general education courses not just by being exposed to a variety of areas of intellectual endeavor but also by taking classes and interacting with, as well as learning from, students with intellectual interests and backgrounds other than their own.

And what about the fact that ‘general education’ courses that vary by major would become useless the moment a student decided to choose their major? Isn’t this implication of GEN’s proposals interesting, when the legitimizing myth of Pathways is that it is supposed to reduce the number of credits ‘wasted’ by students? The real agenda is different, of course, (for which see Part IV of this essay), and this fact shines through in cases like this, when Pathways or its college-level tributaries, like GEN, prove guilty of the sin they are supposed to absolve us from.

Another problem with GEN’s proposals is that it increases the ability of major departments to bend ‘general education’ to the requirements of their respective industries and accrediting boards. This was true to some extent in the old system but the new system takes this practice much further. In the old system, for example, Sociology could be used to satisfy one major’s Behavioral science requirement but it could not be taken to satisfy the Behavioral Sciences requirement of another major that specified Psychology as a prerequisite for some of the major courses. Nonetheless, the old system required all students to take the same number of courses within the various general areas of scientific endeavor, such as LAP, Behavioral and Social Science, and so on.

If GEN’s proposals are implemented, instead of having to ensure that all students take course sequences in specified general areas of scientific endeavor, major departments will just need to ensure that, apart from the major-specific interdisciplinary course mentioned above, students will also take “[t]wo additional liberal arts courses, at least one of which will be an advanced course.” And although the document’s statement that “[d]egree programs are encouraged to permit as much student choice as possible in selecting General Education Core courses” may seem a (weak) attempt to restrict the extent to which major departments bend general education to the needs of the industry, this stipulation also increases the probability that students will do exactly the same thing.

In either scenario general education becomes compromised. If the departments choose to ignore the document’s non-binding encouragement, general education is bent to the needs of the industry and, if they don’t, giving students maximal choice, students will still have the option to tailor their general education courses to the requirements of their future career. In other words,
GEN will move us away from the ideal of general education as a means to the creation of all rounded human beings, since the kind of ‘general education’ students receive will increasingly depend on their major and the requirements of the particular labor market they hope to join. Thus, just to give an example, we may find ourselves in a situation where the ‘general education’ of Nursing or engineering technology students increasingly diverges from that of ADGA students, with Nursing and engineering technology students devoting most of their ‘general education’ credits to natural science while ADGA students devote them to art history.

This problem is aggravated by the buckets of the flexible core requirement which also provide major departments and students with the opportunity to choose courses within the buckets on the basis of utilitarian, market-centered criteria. This means that the General Pathways program, combined with GEN’s proposals, would amount to a General Education at City Tech that was made up of 15 credits of English, Math, Science, Speech/oral communication and 27 credits of courses that could potentially be chosen on the basis of market-based criteria! In the process, there is no guarantee whatsoever that our general education program would get a substantial exposure to all the major areas of intellectual endeavor. My second set of criticisms further illustrates this claim by examining the implications of GEN’s proposals for Behavioral and Social Sciences.

III. Who Needs Social and Behavioral Science in the midst of the Deepest Economic and Social Crisis of our (and our Students’) Lifetime?

The effect of GEN’s proposals is to deemphasize the role of Behavioral and Social Sciences in our students’ general education. In doing so, these proposals also reduce the extent to which the City Tech’s general education program encourages our students to be engaged and informed citizens. Thus, all the noble principles at the beginning of the document that would suggest a preservation of the role of Behavioral and Social Sciences in the general education curriculum are simply ignored.

In the current system the Baccalaureate degree core, for example, requires nine credits of Behavioral or Social science, including a sequence (either within Social or Behavioral Science), of an introductory and “an advanced course that has the introductory course as its prerequisite” (College Catalog, p. 37). In the GEN proposals, the college does not require a Behavioral or Social Science sequence, so in all probability most students will end up getting much less exposure to these areas.

In fact, since the college does not specify Behavioral and Social Sciences as part of the 12-credit college-option requirement, the only exposure that many of them will have to Behavioral and Social Sciences will come from Pathways’ infamous ‘flexible core’ buckets. Far from guaranteeing that our students will get as much exposure to Social and Behavioral Sciences as they did up to this point, these buckets make it possible that students could fulfill the general education requirement with minimal (or even zero!) exposure to Social and Behavioral Sciences.
Consider, for example, the ‘Individual and Society’ bucket, a bucket that seems to be especially close to the subject matter of Social and Behavioral Sciences. The way the requirements of this bucket are articulated make it entirely possible for any number of literature classes to qualify as ‘Individual and Society’ courses. Courses on the literature of Balzac, Camus or the 19th century English novel could easily fulfill four of the five goals ‘Individual and Society’ courses are supposed to fulfill (what I say about the Balzac, Camus and the 19th century novel courses obviously applies more generally, so it is not a surprise that many of our English department’s courses are submitted as part of that bucket). Anyone who teaches courses on the literature of Balzac or Camus could fairly easily argue that their course:

- Identifies the fundamental concepts and methods of literary criticism and literary theory
- Examines how an individual’s place in society affects experiences, values, or choices
- Articulates and assesses ethical views and their underlying premises
- Identifies and engages with local, national, or global trends or ideologies, such as industrialization, capitalism and realism in the case of Balzac, fascism and existentialism in the case of Camus, capitalism, industrialization, conservatism and liberalism in the case of the course on the Victorian novel.

Since a course needs to satisfy only three of the five goals specific to the ‘Individual and Society,’ any literature course that, like the hypothetical example of the courses on Balzac, Camus and the 19th century English novel, fulfills at least three of the goals would have to be allowed as an ‘Individual and Society’ course.

GEN’s proposals do nothing to mitigate this problem (the problem being, of course, not that the student took a class that exposed him/her to great literature but that, in doing so, they were able to avoid having to read the usually more ‘boring’ prose of sociologists, economists, and so on). Implementing these proposals would mean that, far from ensuring that all City Tech students have the substantial exposure to Social and Behavioral Science they need to be informed and engaged citizens as well as fully rounded human beings, the general education envisaged by GEN would make it possible for many of our students to go through college with an exposure to Social and Behavioral Science that was quantitatively minimal and qualitatively less deep, since the probability that a BS or BTech graduate would take an upper-level course in Social or Behavioral Science would drop from 100% to minuscule. In fact, given the City Tech courses that have been submitted for the flexible core buckets, GEN’s proposals would make it possible for many City Tech students to graduate with zero exposure to Social and Behavioral Sciences.

This last point may suggest to some that, in advancing this critique of GEN, I, being a sociologist, am guilty of special pleading. This would be an unfair accusation. I say this not just because the higher than average class sizes in social science courses mean that neither I nor anyone else in my department is desperately trying to recruit more students. In saying this, I am not arguing for the importance of Social and Behavioral Science because I am a sociologist. On the contrary, I decided to become a sociologist because the solid general education I received at Stanford University as an undergraduate ensured my exposure to Social and Behavioral Sciences, while, at the same time, helping me to appreciate their importance and to reconsider the conventionally utilitarian and positivist mindset that I had developed in order to get into Stanford and position myself for future economic success. One of the reasons, therefore, that I have interrupted my numerous other projects to write such a long response to GEN is because my sense of social justice is offended when I see that the combined result of Pathways and the
GEN proposals would be to deprive many of our students the opportunity for a rich general education that I (and I am sure many of the administrators behind Pathways) received and that I would also expect any children I have in the future to receive when they go to college.

I should also add here that the possibility of students graduating without any exposure to Behavioral or Social Sciences raises questions about the thoroughness of the process that went into preparing GEN’s proposals. Having served on the college’s Curriculum committee for six years, I know that the committee carefully vets proposals and requires that even relatively small changes, such as the creation of a new course, be accompanied by surveys that try to gauge the interest of students in such courses. GEN’s proposals, by contrast, do not seem to be accompanied by any surveys or quantitative estimates as to how many students would have the option of not taking any Social or Behavioral Science at all and how many of these students would be likely to take advantage of this option, thus ending up with a ‘general education’ that hardly deserves the name. If such surveys and estimates have been undertaken, they should become publicly available, so that we can see both what their assumptions and results were and whether they are any more solid than the recommendations they have spawned. If such surveys and estimates have not been undertaken, it seems inconceivable to me that we, paraphrasing Einstein, would ‘play dice’ with the education of our students hoping that somehow all will turn well in the end.

Incidentally, all the risks discussed here are likely to increase with time. Given the chaotic nature of the process through which Pathways is being implemented around CUNY, it is possible that many major departments will at first try to keep changes to a minimum, so that, for example, if in the past they directed their students to take sociology for the Behavioral Sciences requirement, now they might direct them to take sociology for the fulfillment of the ‘Individual and Society’ requirement. As the dust from the Pathways wreck settles, however, these major departments or their students would likely learn how to translate the increased latitude at their disposal into a greater push for marketability.

I should add here that timing is one of the reasons why GEN’s choice to underemphasize Social and Behavioral Sciences seems unconscionable to me. Part of the purpose of general education is to open people’s horizons beyond the individualistic self-involvement that our consumerist culture does so much to promote. And yet the people who are proposing a new general education curriculum at City Tech seem to be living in a bubble, completely oblivious of what is happening all around them. They want to underemphasize the role of Social and Behavioral Sciences at a time when:
- capitalist societies around the world are facing the deepest social and economic crisis they have faced since the Great Depression of the 1930s;
- Unprecedented levels of unemployment and poverty the world over are causing a multitude of social problems wreaking havoc with families and every major sphere of social life;
- Unprecedented revolutions and uprisings the world over (the Arab world, Europe, etc) seem to break out when and where nobody expects them;
- An intensification of social and class conflict can be observed around the world and in the U.S (the most obvious US example, of course, being the struggle over labor rights in Wisconsin, but also in many other states as well);
-the global economic and geopolitical landscape is being rapidly redrawn as to the long-standing global North-South divide is superimposed a process of relative decline for the West and a rise of the emerging BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) countries; -partly as a result of the current crisis, racist, anti-immigrant, and at times openly fascist, movements are on the rise in the U.S and around the world; -new and surprising movements take over public space to dramatize the rise of inequality to levels not seen since the Great Depression.

At a time, therefore, when the general public is more than ever interested in books and documentary films that deal with any and all of these phenomena, at a time when ordinary citizens without PhDs turn to works of social and behavioral science because the hard reality that seems to have escaped the attention of City Tech’s General Education committee has made them acutely aware that it is only in such works that they can hope to understand and, as citizens, intervene in what is happening all around them, GEN proposes a ‘general education’ that will reduce rather than preserve the exposure of our students to Social and Behavioral Sciences! Isn’t that odd? And yet…

IV. There is Method to GEN’s (and Pathways’) Madness

GEN’s push for a market-friendly general education is not an isolated phenomenon. The subordination of education to the imperatives of the market is a long-standing feature of the corporatization agenda which has spread around the country and (to some extent) the rest of the world. This is an agenda of remolding universities in the image of corporations. This involves restructuring universities and colleges according to a top-down model that weakens the voice of faculty over the decisions that affect their students’ education (Pathways being a prime example of this), cutting higher education funding and making colleges and universities dependent on external grants, often from the private sector (with all the implications this has for the kind of research that is then pursued), privatizing by a thousand cuts public universities by shifting their cost from the taxpayers to the students (thus also promoting a view of higher education not as a public good but as a privately consumed commodity) and leading students to high levels of debt and long hours of work. Fortunately for the politicians and university administrators whose success, recognition and rewards depend on carrying out these policies, the corporatization agenda creates a perverse dynamic that can skillfully be used to propel this agenda further. As the cruel realities of corporatization take their toll on the ability of students to pursue their college education without distractions, as they negatively affect graduation rates and time to graduation, as they lead the USA to fall behind other industrialized countries in college completion rates, these problems can be used (as was the case with Pathways) as an opportunity to push further corporatization’s false solutions to the problems that it has itself helped create.

The corporatization project is of course part of and dovetails with the neoliberal, free market policies that have prevailed in the US and around the world for the last 35 years. Whenever neoliberal politicians decide to cut taxes for the wealthy or create new loopholes or ‘incentives’ for capitalist corporations, higher education is one of the first things to be cut. And now that the neoliberal model has brought upon us the deepest economic crisis since the Great Depression another parallel between corporatization and neoliberalism comes to the fore. Just as the
corporatization of higher education feeds on the problems that it has itself created, the current crisis of neoliberal capitalism is being used by political and economic elites as an opportunity to attack labor, cut the public sector, including public education, and entrench the neoliberal model even further.

In this context, the seemingly absurd choice to make general education more market-friendly and to deemphasize social and behavioral sciences at a time of deep social and economic crisis when even ordinary citizens turn their attention to economic and social issues may not be an accident. Whatever individual members of the general education committee may have been thinking when they came up with GEN, the objective effect of these proposals is not to empower students as engaged citizens but rather to empower the functionaries of the neoliberal and corporatization projects against students.

One of the effects of the crisis of neoliberalism has been the radicalization of youth and of students both in the US and around the world. This can be seen in the Occupy movement, in the return of student activism around CUNY, in the student protests against tuition hikes and the privatization of higher education in California, Britain, Chile and around the world, and so on. In this context, a general education that creates informed and engaged citizens is an obstacle to the policies of university administrators who, in addition to pursuing the long-standing corporatization project, now have to also participate in the management of neoliberal austerity, as this is expressed in tuition hikes, deteriorating physical plant, and so on. From the point of view of such administrators, a general education that creates citizens who are less passive and more informed, engaged and assertive is a general education that makes it more likely that these students will organize and protest when the toilets at their disposal are often disgusting and beneath their human dignity. A general education that creates engaged citizens is also more likely to create students who will organize and protest when they lose access to the cafeteria for many months in a row, or when the cafeteria they do have access to does not meet basic standards of decency. Such a general education is also more likely to create students who protest the massing of large number of students in small rooms that often do not even have enough desks to accommodate them. And a general education that exposes students both to the long-term socio-economic processes and forces behind corporatization and neoliberalism as well as to the pernicious effects that corporatization and neoliberalism have on society, culture and students is more likely to make students resistant to the neoliberal management of the current crisis that university administrators participate in.

V. Recommendations

Pathways and its intellectual by-products, such as GEN, highlight the need for all CUNY and City Tech faculty to take responsibility for the integrity of the general education we offer to our students. Rather than rubber stamping initiatives that undercut our students’ education by advancing the corporatization project, we have to ask questions, be alert and use any forum we have to question and push back against such initiatives. We also have to push for transparency, so that light can be shed on the processes through which such initiatives become formulated. It is in this spirit that the following proposals are offered:
1. If Pathways survives, City Tech’s implementation should not prioritize marketability over the true goals of general education, which should be the creation of all rounded human beings and informed and engaged citizens. Rather than giving maximum latitude to major departments and students to tailor general education to the demands of the labor market, our new general education program should specify the 12 credits of the College option requirement in such a way as to guarantee that all City Tech students get at least as much exposure to all the major disciplinary areas as they did under the old system. I have shown that this is not the case for Social and Behavioral Science and propose below one way to remedy the problem. If the same problem applies to other disciplinary areas, these areas should be identified and equivalent ways of remedying the problem should be adopted.

2. The adoption of a general education program that deemphasizes Social and Behavioral Science at a time when the U.S and the world are faced with the deepest economic and social crisis of our lifetimes has to be prevented. Neither the amount nor the depth of our students’ exposure to Social and Behavioral Science should suffer. One way this could be done is by requiring that, in pursuing the fulfillment of the flexible core and college option requirements, students should make sure to take at least 9 credits of Social or Behavioral Science, six of which would have to consist in a sequence of a lower and an upper level course within the same discipline.

3. Should we decide to make an interdisciplinary course part of the general education requirement, a clear rationale for this choice should be articulated and interdisciplinary courses within the liberal arts should not be excluded. Moreover, the criteria such courses would have to meet have to be determined before we adopt such a proposal and not be referred to a committee that will decide on these criteria after the fact. There should also be a discussion whether this committee should operate outside college governance bodies. Why, for example, couldn’t the College Council’s Curriculum Committee be empowered to deal with such courses? Given the bias GEN’s proposals have shown against interdisciplinary courses within the liberal arts, wouldn’t it be advisable for the evaluation of interdisciplinary courses to be undertaken by elected faculty members?

4. Given the numerous weaknesses of GEN and its proposals, it would be useful for the college community to learn more about the process that went into their formulation. In my own experience the process followed was rather opaque. For example, having heard reports of the unfolding disaster of Pathways’ implementation around CUNY, I took the time last spring to ask people on the college’s General Education committee questions regarding how the college was planning to implement Pathways. As late as in May, the people I spoke to were unable to give me a clear idea of what the discussion was regarding the 12-credit College Option requirement at City Tech or who was going to determine how these 12 credits would be used. This raises questions in my mind as to whether this process was faculty- rather than administration-driven. In any case, to shed light on all these issues the following steps are necessary:
- The college community should know who the members of the General Committee last spring were, so that we can address to them any questions we have about the process that went into the formulation of GEN and its proposals.

- The minutes of the meeting in which GEN and its proposals were approved by the committee should be released and so should any minutes that give non-members of the committee a sense of the kind of debate that preceded the formulation of GEN and its proposals. Both this step and the one before would, moreover, help non-members of the committee talk to members and determine what (if any) alternatives to GEN’s proposals the committee considered and the reasons it rejected them.

5. As mentioned earlier any surveys and/or quantitative analyses of the likely effect of GEN’s proposals to our students’ exposure to all the major disciplinary areas should become public. If no such surveys or analyses were undertaken, the recommendations mentioned under 4 would also help non-members of the committee to determine why such an obvious step was not taken.