



Senate Resolution #1  
of the 2016-2017 Session

## To Support the Faculty Senate’s General Education and Distribution Credit Working Group’s Proposals

Introduced by  
Justin Onwenu, SA President, 2017-2018  
Monday, April 3, 2017

Passed on

Justin Onwenu, Student Association President, 2017-2018  
Presiding Officer

*Whereas*, the Rice University Mission aspires to cultivate “a diverse community of learning and discovery” and to “increase access to both education and knowledge”;

*Whereas*, Rice aspires to encourage students to find their academic and extracurricular passions;

*Whereas*, many Rice students matriculate to the University with undecided interests, multiple interests, or interests that may change;

*Whereas*, transfer students into Rice may need more classes to still complete the curriculum in four years if credits do not align;

*Whereas*, a significant proportion of Rice undergraduates change or add a major or minor to their intended major at matriculation;

*Whereas*, The Faculty Senate Working Group on General Education and Distribution Requirements was formed in response to increasing dissatisfaction among faculty and students with certain aspects of the current distribution system;

*Whereas*, The Faculty Senate Working Group on General Education and Distribution Requirements has recommended the following changes:

1. Reduce general education requirements from the current 12 credit hours in each of three distribution areas (for a total of at least 36 hours) to 9 credit hours each of three distribution areas plus a FWIS course (for a total of at least 30 hours).
2. Revise the descriptive language for distribution courses and for each distribution group.
3. Enhance consistency of process across schools by including the School Course Review Committee as the primary group responsible for recommending courses for distribution to the dean of the school during the initial review under the new criteria and thereafter during the annual “roll call” by the OTR. Among new courses submitted for the New Course Review process by the March 1 or October 1 deadlines, identify those that are appropriate for distribution credit by mid-term each semester, rather than only in the spring annually.

*Whereas*, The Faculty Senate Working Group on General Education and Distribution Requirements has had significant input from a wide range of academic disciplines and stakeholders;

*Whereas*, these proposed changes to general education requirements meet the rules established by Rice’s accreditation bodies;

*Whereas*, since 1967, the 36 hour distribution requirement have not been adjusted despite increased academic demands on students;

*Whereas*, adjustments to Rice University general education requirements have historically been unsuccessful;

*Whereas*, The Faculty Senate Working Group’ proposals have garnered wide support from humanities, social sciences and STEM professors;

*Whereas*, The Student Association has spent months gathering student opinion on said proposals and these proposals have garnered wide support from students across all residential colleges and academic schools;

*Whereas*, some of these collected student responses revolve around students feeling as if distribution requirements *in fact* limit their abilities to pursue a broad and general education;

*Whereas*, the current requirement of 36 credit hours in distribution courses makes it more difficult to meet other graduation requirements given the 18 credit hour threshold, especially for those without AP credit, multiple major/dual degree candidates, and students who change their major;

*Whereas*, Given an increased emphasis on co-curricular and extracurricular opportunities, many students find it difficult to complete all graduation requirements;

*Whereas*, addressing student wellbeing is a major goal of students and administration and is heavily influenced by a culture of overexertion due to academic requirements;

*Whereas*, the Student Association recognizes the importance of a Rice education that provides students a broad and rounded education that exposes them to subjects outside of their academic majors but also recognizes and helps students to meet the large number of graduation requirements found in certain majors;

*Whereas*, if accepted, this proposal would give students more freedom in dictating the direction of their education based on their own interests while also ensuring that a Rice degree delivers consistent outcomes regardless of their fields of study;

*Whereas*, if accepted, this proposal allows courses to be offered in the following semester to be reviewed for distribution credit designation during each semester (rather than just during the spring semester for the following academic year as is the current case);

*Whereas*, if accepted, these changes would be a step in the right direction but in no means an absolute solution to existing concerns about university and major requirements;

*Resolved*, that the Student Association *strongly* encourages the Faculty Senate to vote in favor of the Working Group's proposal to reduce the number of distribution credit hours required;

*Resolved*, The Student Association supports the proposed revisions to the descriptive language for distribution requirements and for each distribution group;

*Resolved*, The Student Association *strongly* supports reviewing courses for distribution credit status for the following semester in both the fall and spring semesters;

*Resolved*, The Student Association supports the proposal to have School Course Review Committees be responsible for recommending courses for distribution credit status to the deans of their respective academic schools in order to enhance consistency of process across schools;

*Resolved*, The Student Association requests that Rice University Deans across all schools convene a comprehensive and methodical review of major requirements within their respective schools.