

The General Education Act

The model General Education Act (GEA) is a **transformative** proposal. It brings **fundamental change** to state university systems. The GEA does **three big things**:

- 1) The GEA establishes a 42 credit-hour program of required courses largely shared by every student. This is about as many graduation requirements outside of the major as students must now take. The difference in the GEA is that **all students** must take a specific program of courses in **Western Civilization, American History and Civics**, and the **Great Books of Western Literature, Philosophy, and Religion**, including **The Bible, Catholic and Protestant Literature (e.g. Augustine and Luther)**, **classic Greek authors like Homer and Plato**, literary masters like **Shakespeare**, and many other classic works. This can be done by law because **legislatures can mandate graduation requirements**.
- 2) The GEA establishes a **new and independent School of General Education** within any university to which the law is applied. The GEA puts that new School **solely in charge of designing and teaching the new required courses**. The GEA gives the **dean** of the new school **ultimate authority** over the design of the new courses. **The new dean is in charge of hiring or appointing all faculty to the new School of General Education, and only they can teach the new graduation requirements. The new dean is appointed only by the president of the university. Faculty in the university cannot interfere with the hiring of the new dean or any of his hires to the new School.** Some current faculty members can teach the new curriculum, but that is at the discretion of the new dean alone.
- 3) The GEA represents a **fundamental long-term change in the educational mission and strategy** of the university. When a university experiences such a change of mission and strategy, it is allowed to exercise what is called **“program discontinuance.”** In other words, **it can shut down whole programs and departments and let go of faculty** in those programs and departments, **including tenured professors**. The GEA authorizes all of this. The university can thus let go of a number of faculty members roughly equivalent to the number of new faculty hired to staff the new School of General Education.

Other provisions and issues include the following:

- A) The legislature can choose to apply the GEA to anything from a single campus, to a multi-campus university system, to the entire state system.
- B) The new School of General Education can give MA and PhD degrees. This will allow it to train a new generation of teachers committed to traditional general education. These graduates can help to staff future GEA based programs in Alabama and other states.
- C) The GEA does also **require a course in non-Western cultures** for all students.
- D) Science majors are required to take a slightly smaller number of the new courses since they often face more required courses in technical areas necessary for job preparation.
- E) **Note that the GEA will not work if the university president is not committed to traditional general education and willing to appoint a dean who is committed to it as well. Trustees must put a supportive university president in place.**