

## THE UNEXPECTED BONUS: ELECTIVE UNITS

Many entering students, freshman and transfers, don't realize the importance of elective courses to the baccalaureate degree. Many parents, especially of freshman, also don't realize that students must choose some elective units to fulfill graduation requirements. The 120-40 units needed to graduate from CSULB demands more than general education and major requirements. If Engineering allows its majors few electives, the Journalism major permits many and requires its students to use some of them for a minor, some specialized study of less depth in a different subject. All students need from 1 to 30 units (depending on the major) of electives.

Electives play a very important role in course selection for entering students. Students need to know that choosing electives early is just as important as selecting major and general education courses. Electives round out a balanced schedule of classes, not with "breather" courses, but with sound academic choices that are practical too.

For example, taking ethnic studies and internationally focused electives serves a very practical purpose. All students, whatever their major, will work and live in a diverse society. Think of how sensible it is for Business majors to know about Asian cultures, languages, and economics given the explosive growth of business on the Pacific Rim. Engineers must have global perspectives if they wish to become truly successful in their chosen fields. Journalism majors will report on world as well as multicultural issues and must be well-versed in their matters. Students majoring in Fine Arts and Humanities should want to know about African-American, Asian-American, Native-American and Mexican music, art, and literature.

Some involvement with computers is advisable for every major today. Moreover, since no discipline exists in a vacuum, knowledge of geography, of history, and of human cultural and religious diversity provides a useful context for any vocation. While General Education supplies a beginning to cultural literacy, further development in these broad areas of knowledge is far from impractical. Indeed, almost every major on campus offers courses that can be used for elective units.

If a student has two special interests, electives can be used for a "double major" completing two baccalaureate programs. Electives can also be used for minors of certificate programs, and as a beginning toward credentials or, under special circumstances, toward a future master's degree.

Electives are not just empty pockets to be filled with whatever fits the time available. They often spark secondary careers and lifelong interests. They can and should be the "unexpected bonus" of a university education.

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