MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 28, 2014

TO: Jerry D. Moore, Ph.D.
Academic Senate, Chair

FROM: Kaye Bragg, Dean Undergraduate Studies, Lower Division GE Ad Hoc Committee, Chair
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SUBJECT: Review, Deliberations, and Recommendations from the Academic Senate General Education Ad Hoc Committee

This memo is a summary of the discussion topics with recommendations from the committee. The following individuals were members of the committee: Kaye Bragg, George Jennings, Ivonne Heinz-Balcazaar, Nop Ratanasiripong, Debra Best, Lisa Hutton, Jamie Dote-Kwan, Cal Caswell, Bea Gadduang, and Hillina Gebreyohannes.

The committee held a series of meetings throughout the fall 2014 term. The committee reviewed and compared the GE packages of other CSU campuses to our package based on requirements, units and topics. In addition, we referenced Chancellor Office policy 1065 regarding GE areas and unit requirements. We also reviewed WSCUC guidelines regarding core competencies and institutional learning outcomes. Attached to this memo is an index of all documents and meeting minutes from committee activities.
The committee proposes three recommendations for consideration:

1. Reduce the number of GE units and modify how courses are counted given guidelines of EO1065.
2. Revise GE area learning objectives to align with CSUDH institutional learning outcomes and incorporate WSCUC core competencies into each area.
3. Expand student choices through designing alternative themes based on a collection of interdisciplinary courses across GE areas.

**Recommendation One:**
Guidelines for General Education breadth and content requirements are noted in Executive Order No. 1065. EO 1065 establishes a minimum of 48 semester units based upon a collection of subsections A through E. Of the 48 semester units at least 9 of these semester units must be upper-division level.

We discussed unit count and content requirements of the GE packages of other CSU campuses. Through that discussion we identified several GE packages with a total unit count of 48 semester units. These GE packages also addressed topics of concern regarding GE breadth and basic skills (writing, reading, critical thinking and quantitative reasoning). These GE packages are listed below with an explanation of the topic. A complete summary of all CSU GE packages is part of the documents attached.

**CSU Long Beach:**
The GE course offerings show a “breadth of content” preserved across Areas A-E. The integration of learning skills with GE courses. A reflective course for integrating the collection of GE courses.

**CSU Chico:**
Area A provides a foundation in academic skills for student success. In particular, a requirement of four intensive writing courses. Offerings in Area C and D provide students with a variety of courses across disciplines.

**CSU Los Angles:**
The GE course offerings show a “breadth of content” preserved across Areas A-E. The collection of courses and requirements in Area A is another example of a foundation in academic skills for student success. In particular, both writing and quantitative requirements are part of Area A.

These examples illustrate how the unit count of our GE program could be reduced but still preserve the...
board discipline areas. We encourage review of these CSU campus programs in the revision of our program.

We recommend a reduction in the number of GE units and modification of how courses are counted given guidelines of EO 1065 and CSUDH institutional learning outcomes. There was not unanimous agreement among the committee members regarding how to reduce the unit count. We offer two options regarding the unit revision of our current lower division GE program.

**Option one: Reducing lower division GE total to 43 units (total GE program 52)**

Revision of Area A including all foundation courses for student success: 12-15 (existing) plus 9 units. This reconfiguring of the information in Area A includes all the “Golden Four” requirements. The “Golden Four” requirements are Area A 1, 2, 3 and Area B 4. These requirements reinforce core competencies in communication (oral and written), quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking. In addition, the U.S. history and U.S. Constitution requirements would be added to this area, D3 and D4. The collection of courses listed in this section would provide students with the basic learning objectives and core competencies to build upon for courses in other areas. Completion of Area A requirements would be part of advising materials and initial sequence of courses for first year students. Advising would also note the examination option for U.S. history and/or U.S. Constitution requirements.

Individual unit counts for Areas B, C and D would be reduced by 3 units. Several committee members opposed the reduction of Area C by 3 units. These members noted the contribution of these courses to the interdisciplinary perspective of GE, specifically HUM 200.

**Option two: Reduce lower division GE total to 40 units (total GE program 49)**

Revision of Area A to include the “Golden Four” requirements of Area A 1, 2, 3 and Area B4. In addition, the U.S. Constitution requirement would be added, Area D3. In contrast to option one, the US history requirement would remain in Area D. This would reduce both Areas C and D by 3 units to 6-9 units. Students would still have the option to complete the U.S. Constitution or U.S. history requirements by examination.

For both option one and option two, Area E would remain 3 units fulfilling the lifelong learning requirement.

In addition, the question of “double counting” from major courses for GE area requirements was a
component of our discussions regarding the number of GE units and the units per area. Based on those
discussions, we noted several majors already utilize major courses to satisfy lower division GE
requirements. These courses were approved through the curriculum review process and found to satisfy
the learning objectives of the GE area requirement. Current examples of this “double counting” is found
in natural science majors and liberal studies for Area B requirements. Several committee members
theorized that social science, arts and humanities majors may also have courses that could satisfy the
learning objectives of a GE area. Areas B, C or D. This use of a major course for a GE learning
requirement could provide a connection between the major and the GE program for students. The
committee also debated if this “double counting” would still provide an integrated course of study of
sufficient breadth for students from the GE program. The committee noted that “double counting” in a
single area would not excuse students from requirements in other GE areas outside of the student’s major
area. However, the committee was concerned about how many courses could be “double counted” for a
given major. While the committee agreed that a limit should be set for “double counting” we offer no
unit recommendation. Instead we recommend the Senate discuss and draft a resolution related to the unit
count for “double counting” per major.

We propose implementation of a revised unit count through a series of steps:
Spring term 2015 the Senate should contact ASI regarding student opinions about revision of the lower
division GE requirements. This consultation should be in collaboration with AVP of Institutional
Effectiveness, Dr. Kaul, who is currently designing several student surveys related to accreditation
activities. In addition to student surveys, focus groups of select student groups, such as graduating
seniors or sophomores, could also be utilized to identify the contribution of the GE courses to a student’s
undergraduate academic experience.

Spring term 2015 the Senate should host open forums for faculty and staff to discuss purpose and revision
of the GE program. These forums would provide additional input regarding the recommendations of this
committee.

Given information from the ASI consultation, open forum/s and our recommendations, the GE Committee
would draft a resolution revising the unit count of the GE program for Senate consideration no later than
Fall 2015.

Implementation of “double counting” from major courses for GE area requirements would remain part of
the curriculum review process requiring a department to submit proposals. The Senate would draft a
resolution in Spring 2015 regarding the total unit number an individual major could “double count” in the GE program.

**Recommendation Two:**
Our second recommendation is to revise GE area learning objectives to align with CSUDH institutional learning outcomes and incorporate WSCUC core competencies into each area. The committee discussed the bifurcation between General Education courses and major courses. The student members shared the students’ perceptions of the GE program as a “check list,” and “busy work” without relevance to their background, interests or major. The committee also discussed the importance of expanding writing, critical thinking and quantitative reasoning beyond single course requirements or single department responsibility. The lower division GE courses should provide students with the basic skills and knowledge they will need for research, inquiry and application in their major studies. Referencing the WSCUC competencies of GE, Standards 2.2A, all committee members agreed a revision of area learning objectives is needed to embed these competencies across the GE program and to integrate GE courses into the baccalaureate program curriculum.

The committee members also noted the need to clarify the unique Dominguez Hills’ experience and mission found in the GE program. Through this revision of the GE program learning objectives, the connection between the GE program and our institutional learning outcomes would be explained. We also agreed that “high impact practice” learning experiences should be a formal part of the lower GE program. Finally, all members agreed that more departments should be involved in developing GE courses to increase the variety and selection of courses in each area available to students. This variety would expose students to new ways of inquiry and new ideas outside their personal experience and background.

Implementation of this proposal would be initiated through a series of steps:
Spring term 2015, the GE Committee would begin a consultation with the Assessment Director, Dr. Carrier, and AVP of Institutional Effectiveness, Dr. Kaul, to draft a revised set of learning objectives for the GE program. The revision of learning objectives would include the WSCUC competencies across the various areas of the GE program.

The first competency integrated across the GE program should be writing. The committee members identified writing and reading as critical foundation skills for student academic success. By Fall 2015, the GE Committee should have identified a set of courses across areas with writing as a learning objective. The implementation of this core competency will complement the current activities of Academic Affairs
related to writing intensive courses, hiring of an English faculty with “writing across the curriculum expertise,” various faculty learning communities focused on writing and new student instructor support for high “drop, withdrawal and fail” DWF courses.

Through this process of revising learning objectives, the GE Committee would create working groups with faculty from relevant academic departments per each GE area. These working groups would collaborate in the revision of area learning objectives. The GE Committee would submit the revised lower division GE program learning objectives to the Senate by Fall 2015 for consideration.

**Recommendation Three:**
The committee reviewed the GE packages of other CSU campuses to our package based on requirements, units and topics. In the comparison of these packages, we discussed the “themes and paths” option. In these options, students explore a common issue/theme through a collection of courses across disciplines. This interdisciplinary option engages students in drawing connections between courses. Student members were very excited about this GE option because it could make GE more relevant to students’ interests and backgrounds. Two packages referenced by the committee were the Chico and Long Beach examples.

Given our discussion, we propose a recommendation to expand student choices through designing alternative themes based on a collection of inter-disciplinary courses across GE areas. Each theme would be a unique package of courses that integrated a common activity, project or research question across the courses. The package would include courses from area B, C, D and E. Students could have the option to take individual courses per GE areas or a theme package for Areas B, C, D and E. The theme package would not replace the current GE areas but represent an alternative for students interested in one of the theme topics.

CSUDH has some experience with themes in the lower division GE through a pilot program of GE learning communities, Fall 2013 and Spring 2014. The GE learning communities were paired GE courses across different GE areas with faculty redesigning assignments for a common learning activity for students across the two courses. For example, CHE 101 was paired with MUS 101. Students learned about physical responses to different types of music and learning different meanings for common vocabulary in different disciplines. In the pilot program, nine different paired GE courses were designed by faculty.

Implementation of this recommendation would begin Spring term 2015 with instructors who participated in the GE learning community pilot program sharing their experiences at a Faculty Development Center
FDC event. A call for proposals of themes for a pilot program would be announced by Academic Affairs/Provost. Each proposal will represent a faculty workgroup. Each workgroup will identify the theme and collection of current GE courses to be part of the theme package. Each faculty workgroup will be a peer-to-peer collaboration among colleagues with a shared research interest or professional background related to the theme. The initial collection of courses involved in the GE themes would be existing GE courses that have revised assignments or activities to contribute to the student’s knowledge about the theme. In Fall term 2015, the FDC would host several workshops guiding these faculty workgroups in the design of learning activities around a common theme.

The initial collection of courses involved in the GE themes would be existing GE courses that have revised assignments or activities to contribute to the student’s knowledge about the theme. The first courses would be taught Spring 2016. Given assessment of the pilot program, the collection of themes could be revised or expanded with new courses from the current GE collection or new courses. These new courses would need to complete the curriculum review process including a review by the GE committee.

This new GE option will require advising of students. In contrast to the current GE program, the theme option is a collection/package of specific courses that must all be completed.

In conclusion, as committee chair I want to acknowledge the service of each committee member. Our meetings reflected a thoughtful and candid discussion in which all members were engaged. All committee members were committed to an objective review of the GE program in terms of the academic experience of undergraduate students. I also want to thank the two student representatives for their comments and insights regarding a student perception of GE courses. This student perspective was an important element in shaping several of the recommendations. Finally, I want to acknowledge our recorder for these meetings, Susanne Walker. Your notes provided an accurate record of our discussions and reference for our report.

The members of the Lower Division General Education Ad Hoc Committee thank you for the opportunity to serve both the University and Academic programs. We look forward to working with you as you implement these recommendations.