



Date: December 15, 2014

TO: Su Swarat, Director of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness

FROM: Peter Nwosu
Associate Vice President, Academic Programs

RE: Program Performance Review: General Education

I am pleased to submit the “Dean’s” response to the Program Performance Review of the General Education Program. The General Education Program Self-Study was completed September 1, 2013, with the Review Team visit occurring on October 7, 2014. The Review Team report was received on October 23, 2014 and the Response, written by Director of Undergraduate Studies & General Education Dr. Alison Wrynn, was received on December 1, 2014. The report covers 2013-2014.

As stated in the 2013-15 University Catalog, page 50,

The General Education program at Cal State Fullerton is the basis of a university education. It is the foundation upon which each and every major is built. The goal of the campus is to provide a well-rounded citizen, not only of the region and the nation but the world as well. Thus, this broad-ranging curriculum has been carefully designed to ensure that every graduate is exposed to current thinking and scholarship that hopefully will provide a lifetime of appreciation of the liberal arts and sciences, as well as the ability to grow intellectually, ethically, morally and technologically well into the 21st century.

The General Education program at CSUF is governed by Chancellor’s Office Executive Order 1065, UPS 411.200 and UPS 411.201. There are 477 distinct courses in the General Education program; in some categories there is essentially only one course that meets the requirement: Categories C.4 [Origins of the World Civilizations—HIST 110A], D.2 [World Civilizations and Cultures—HIST 110B], and D.4 [American Government—POSC 100] (these categories have two courses in each category—but one of the courses is an HONORS course taken by a very limited number of students). Some categories contain numerous courses (C.3 [Explorations in the Arts and Humanities] has 120 courses, D.5 [Explorations in the Social Sciences] has 149 courses and “Z” has 165 courses [Cultural Diversity]). During the Fall 2014 semester there were over 2000 separate sections of General Education courses, which produced 13,846 FTES; 51% of the total UG FTES produced throughout the University. There were 840 faculty instructing these course sections.

I would like to thank the General Education Committee of the Academic Senate for preparing the Self-Study report. Overall, the Review Team report provides an accurate

judgment of the program and I thank the Team for their comprehensive and attentive review. The reviewers very favorably commended CSU, Fullerton for the work conducted at the campus-wide conversation on General Education and its assessment during an Academic Senate/Academic Affairs retreat that took place in January 2014; the revisions to the GE Student Learning Outcomes; the creation of pilot thematic pathways at the lower division level in General Education; the administrative commitment to General Education demonstrated by the resources that have been allocated to create a new position of Director of Undergraduate Studies and General Education, the appointment of two Faculty GE Coordinator positions to facilitate pedagogical innovation and faculty development within the General Education Program, and the support to develop faculty and administrative expertise in General Education program development by sending faculty and administrative teams to AAC&U conferences, including the AAC&U Institute on Integrative Learning and the Departments (July 2014), as well as a team consisting of faculty and Academic Programs personnel to the February 2014 AAC&U conference on General Education and Assessment.

1. The relationship between general education, disciplinary knowledge, and the degree program.

This section of report addresses the complexity of the General Education program at CSU, Fullerton. In particular it focuses on “bottlenecks” within certain General Education categories (with very few course offerings), the campus-based policy that there is to be no double counting of courses between the major and General Education and the issue of “coherence” in our General Education program. On the issue of bottlenecks, as the Review Team noted, some of the problems that occur are driven by the burden placed on some of these courses (particularly anatomy & physiology, political science and math) by being both GE and high-demand lower division prerequisite courses for STEM and health-related majors. I agree with the review team that as the budget allows, more sections of these courses should be scheduled. In addition, colleges are encouraged to look at curriculum innovations such as “virtual labs” as a way of offering more course sections with limited lab facilities. It would also be appropriate at this time to look at what types of courses other CSUs use to meet the General Education categories that CSU, Fullerton has very few courses in (potentially creating bottlenecks) and see if there are any other appropriate curricular offerings on our campus that could be included in these categories.

On the issue of “double counting” General Education courses, I agree with the Review Team’s assessment and support the Academic Senate’s attempts to revise our Double Counting policies to increase equity between native and transfer students and among the majors and colleges, to focus on Student Learning Goals and Outcomes, and to emphasize the totality and unity of the degree program, including both General Education and major requirements.

The Review Team noted that we should attempt to create some sort of “coherence” in our General Education program for students. The reviewers indicated that we have made attempts recently at creating some of this coherence for students in both our lower and upper division General Education programs through pilot programs focusing on General Education “thematic pathways” of suggested courses for students. By the end of the 2014-15 academic year limited, preliminary data will be collected that will give us an initial impression on the impact of the lower division pathways. Upper division pathways were piloted for the first time during 2014-15 by the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. If the data indicates that it is appropriate to continue such endeavors, future General Education pathway projects should be coordinated through the Office of Academic Programs in order to reduce duplication of effort and enhance the opportunity for the creation of these types of pathways in all colleges. The Academic Senate should be involved in discussions as we move forward beyond these two pilot years.

2. General Education Program assessment

I agree with the recommendation of the Review Team that the campus build on existing assessment infrastructures, rather than creating a stand-alone GE assessment program. In so doing we may find our efforts more sustainable. The recently revised General Education Learning Outcomes (approved by the General Education Committee on October 31, 2014 and forwarded to the Academic Senate) form the foundation for assessment of General Education based on outcomes. This work should be done with support from the Assessment Work Groups that have been established in each College under the guidance of the Office of Academic Programs as well as the Office of Assessment and Educational Effectiveness. This assessment can begin immediately and assess not only the campus based General Education Learning Outcomes but also provide us with the opportunity to assess both core competencies as well as competencies “at or near graduation” as required by WASC.

3. GE support and infrastructure

As the Review Team noted, there has been new support for General Education on the CSUF campus over the past two years. With the appointment of a Director of Undergraduate Studies & General Education, as well as two half-time GE Faculty Coordinators, the campus is demonstrating its commitment to integrating General Education and the undergraduate degree programs across campus. For the long term success and maintenance of changes to General Education it is vital that shifts that are already underway across campus in advising continue.

The Review Team suggested that CSUF revisit its advising model to minimize the distinction between major advising and GE advising and, ideally, move toward integrated degree program advising. In this model, professional staff advisors within the Academic Advising Center (AAC) would collaborate with college and departmental faculty and staff advisors to

support student learning throughout their degree programs. The AAC would play a primary role in the CSUF advising system as a hub for advisor training and support. College and departmental faculty and staff advisors would receive training on GE Program advising as a condition of their work and integrate GE advising into their individual and group advising sessions. This model is to be found in the newly established Student Success Teams that have been created in each college. The Retention Specialists, Graduation Specialists and even the Career Specialists can encourage students to select General Education courses with an eye towards graduate school and career, as opposed to the current “check box” mentality that frequently is the case with student selection of General Education coursework.

As part of the support of General Education, I recommend that the General Education Website be housed in the Office of Academic Programs, under the auspices of the Office of Undergraduate Studies and General Education. This will allow AP to maintain the website on a regular basis and free the AAC to focus on advisor training and support needed to advance our student success goals. It will be important that the AAC still has a link on its main page to “General Education” that will direct students, faculty and others to this new page.

The Office of Academic Programs welcomes the opportunity to engage in a campus wide conversation about General Education. Of course all changes to the General Education Program will require careful consideration, consultation and planning to assure that all campus stakeholders have input into the decisions to be made.