



General Education Committee

MEMORANDUM

To: Ed Fink
Associate Vice President, Undergraduate Academic Programs

From: Greg Childers *GC*
Chair, General Education Committee

Date: March 6, 2023

Re: GE committee chair response to the PPR team report

First, I would like to thank the review team for the time, effort, and broad perspective that they brought to the GE program review. The members of the review team were

- Mark Van Seltz, San Jose State University
- Danny Paskin, CSU Long Beach
- Merri Lynn Casem, CSU Fullerton

Further, I would also like to thank Ed Fink and the members of his office for organizing the visit and being a welcoming and supportive presence throughout the day of the visit.

I am pleased that the team determined that the overall GE program at CSUF is healthy, and that they provided a robust list of commendations and recommendations for the program in addition to highlighting numerous issues that can be addressed.

Commendations

- use of Faculty Learning Communities in assessment
- breadth of Area F course offerings
- strong recognition at the assessment level that GE is a program rather than a set of courses
- recognition that improvements to the GE program may be resource-intensive

Recommendations

- further develop the Faculty Learning Community (FLC) leadership
- close the loop regarding FLC recommendations
- clearly define Overlay Z as a GE campus requirement and clarify the use of transfer courses to meet Overlay Z requirements
- consider clarifying the exemption policy to highlight the individual versus programmatic nature of the CSUF exemption process

- confirm through data analyses the validity of the claim that Overlay Z delays graduation for many students and, if confirmed, remediate through one or more of several options listed
- consider developing upper division GE courses that also meet AI requirements to increase double counting
- monitor for continuing effective assessments of GE goals
- consider developing an intentional sequence for information literacy within the CSUF GE requirements, including reinforcement in the upper division GE requirements, potentially explicitly incorporating information literacy requirements
- include outreach about the goals and intentions of GE in workshops for faculty such as those proposed for “closing the loop” on assessment by the FLC, below
- consider expanding the role of the FLC to “close the loop” on assessment and present out at an end of year workshop for the instructors teaching in the area that was assessed
- create a separate University committee devoted specifically to recertifying previously-approved GE courses along with defining and updating the model and cycle for the recertification process
- hire a GE Director or Coordinator to coordinate GE efforts on campus
- create structural mechanisms to facilitate use of GE assessment data such as an easily accessible repository to house and workshops to present the data
- create a central, readily available, complete guide on GE certification
- Enhance student understanding of GE as a cohesive program by expanding GE orientation materials, creating major-specific GE recommendations, and having centralized monitoring of student course demand by GE area to meet university-level needs
- continue web-based tracking of GE courses that offer a faculty-led study abroad component and expand it for other study abroad experiences as well as GE articulation
- consider creating a centralized mechanism to recommend library resources for GE areas
- improve GE messaging to students by cleaning the advising information available online and using proactive messaging, such as text messages and smartphone apps, to better reach students

Issues

The review team commented on several issues organized into three themes, structure and compliance with CSU system policies, assessment, and implementation. Each will be addressed below.

Structure and compliance with CSU system policies

- Structural Compliance with CSU GE
 - The CSU GE program was found to be in compliance with CSU policies, but some concerns were noted with recommended actions.
 - The team expressed concerns about upper-division courses meeting lower-division requirements in Areas E and F (there are none in Area A) due to potential confusion about the courses meeting GE upper-division requirements. The GE committee (GEC), and Ethnic Studies Requirement Committee (ESRC) for Area F, has weighted this carefully. In Area E, the GEC recognizes the potential for confusion and voted to not accept new proposals for upper-division courses but to allow existing upper-division courses to continue to be offered to not further disrupt department offerings. In Area F, the ESRC voted to allow upper-division courses that meet area objectives. The team further recommends reviewing

upper-division courses in Areas B, C, and D to ensure they require a prerequisite of completion of the Golden Four. The GEC along with the then Office of Academic Programs undertook a systematic review of upper-division prerequisites in AY 2020-2021 to ensure compliance with CSU policy and have carefully enforced that policy for all new courses added to GE since.

- Concerns are expressed about the interaction of Overlay Z with transfer requirements. Currently, Overlay Z is considered complete if a student takes a course included in Overlay Z at CSUF or transfers in with a course that articulates to a course in Overlay Z. If not completed, a transfer student can complete Overlay Z with an upper-division GE course. Recommendations are to clearly define Overlay Z as a GE campus requirement and clarify the use of transfer courses to meet Overlay Z requirements.
 - Unit distribution changes, such as GE waivers currently granted to high-unit programs, should not be approved systemically without system level authorization. All waivers currently in effect were adopted in consultation with the Chancellor's office. Recommendation is to consider clarifying this policy to highlight the individual versus programmatic nature of the CSUF exemption process.
 - Despite a rushed implementation, Area F is well designed and implemented, and appears to be working smoothly.
 - Due to funding conflicts and difficulties scheduling courses only for participants in the Pathway, the pathway project was discontinued.
- Concerns were raised about possible confusion for both students and advisors due to the (currently) four different GE patterns based on catalog year. The Titan Degree Audit (TDA) currently does a good job of clearly identifying incomplete GE requirements for each student based on the catalog year. The team notes an implementation at San Jose State that allows different catalog years for the GE and major program. However, I am concerned that this practice may not be in compliance with [Title 5 § 40401](#).
 - It is noted that Overlay Z can potentially add units and delay student graduation. Recommendations are to confirm through data analyses the validity of this claim and, if confirmed, remediate through one or more of several options listed.
 - Concern is raised that only three units of the American Institutions (AI) requirement double counts with GE, while campuses may double count up to six units. The team recommends to consider developing upper division GE courses that also meet AI requirements to increase double counting and free units for ADT transfer pathways. However, I am concerned that option may disrupt current offerings in upper-division Areas C and D.

Assessment

- Information literacy is a WASC assessment standard but it is not explicitly identified in the CSU Golden Four nor in the CSUF GE standards. It is primarily addressed in Area A and often explicitly taught by library-based instruction. Recommendation is to consider building an intentional sequence of development for information literacy within the CSUF GE requirements, including reinforcement in the upper division GE requirements, potentially explicitly incorporating information literacy requirements.

- Development of GE goals and outcomes is commended. The team recommends continued monitoring for effective assessments of these goals to continue. Assessment results are publicly reported on the university assessment website.
- A lack of understanding of the intentionality in GE by first-year students is highlighted, while it is noted that upper-division students had a better understanding of the value of GE. Recommendations are to include outreach about the goals and intentions of GE in workshops for faculty such as those proposed for “closing the loop” on assessment by the Faculty Learning Communities (FLCs).
- It is noted that double counting required by the 2017 revision of EO 1100 may reduce the value or diversity of GE as experienced by students; this issue is worth following.
- The team recognizes that frequent revisions of GE policy redirect energy from assessment. The team notes that continued assessment efforts are justified and the TDA can handle catalog year differences although advisors need to be aware of them.
- The review team notes that the current assessment of approximately 1 GE goal each year is a good practice and should be retained. Recommendation is to consider expanding the role of the FLC to “close the loop” on assessment and present out at an end of year workshop for the instructors teaching in the area assessed to spread best practices and work towards greater consistency and comprehension of the goals to be achieved. Rubrics, tools, and other resources are housed on the assessment website. The expanded function may require additional support. Given the varying timeline for WASC reviews and the nature of the institutional report, it is unclear how the GE program review cycle would be tied to the WASC campus review or how it would lead to better direction for the programmatic review.
- The team notes that concerns about online versus in-person classes extend beyond GE and should be addressed in WASC or other full-campus evaluation processes.
- Concerns are raised about the assessment of waived GE content, particularly critical thinking. Recommendation is to ensure that GE assessments are performed for “content-covered” waivers. WASC requires that assessment occur at or near graduation. Therefore, GE assessment takes place in upper-division courses that are taken by all students including those with waived lower-division requirements.

Implementation

- Bottlenecks may be created by the requirement that all students complete writing and math requirements in the first year, high DFW courses, and recommended course sequences for high enrollment majors. No recommendations are provided, but course availability is adjusted by departments in response to enrollment trends.
- There is concern that adjunct faculty may be over-represented in GE instruction. However, it is noted that the underlying issue is more about professional development for both adjunct and tenure-track faculty and access to resources supporting GE. The GE committee recommends the offering of professional development opportunities for all faculty teaching GE courses.
- There is systemwide pressure for some GE areas to be relatively restricted to faculty from one or very few disciplines. Area F is an explicit example, but it can occur in other areas as well. The team notes that this is a campus-specific implementation decision and provides no explicit recommendation. The GEC generally takes an open approach to GE course approvals when allowed guided by [UPS 411.102](#).

- The team recognizes that the GE committee has a number of high-priority, high-workload tasks that do not allow time for recertification of current GE courses, and recommends the creation of a separate University committee devoted specifically to recertifying previously-approved GE courses along with defining and updating the model and cycle for the recertification process. I fully support the creation of such a committee.
- The team highlights the benefits of having a GE Director or Coordinator position to more closely focus on GE and recommends hiring a Director or Coordinator to coordinate GE efforts on campus. This was also a recommendation of the GE Task Force, and would bring the campus in line with most other CSU campuses.
- The team expresses concern that faculty do not have the time, space, or room to purposefully examine GE assessment data, and recommends creation of structural mechanisms such as an easily accessible repository to house and workshops to present the data while recognizing the addition faculty workload this could create.
- The team identified the lack of a central, readily available, complete guide on GE certification of a course and recommends the creation of such a guide. This should be added to the Office of Undergraduate Academic Programs website.
- The team again expresses concern that students see GE more as a checklist of courses to complete than a cohesive, intentional, relevant GE program, and recommends tackling this on multiple fronts by expanding GE orientation materials, creation of major-specific GE recommendations, and having centralized monitoring of student course demand by GE area to meet university-level needs.
- The team commends the Study Abroad staff's use of web-based tracking of GE courses that offer a faculty-led study abroad component and recommends continuation of this practice and expansion of it for other study abroad experiences, as well as use of it for GE articulation.
- The team notes that library collections tend to be driven by departmental needs and recommends considering the creation of a centralized mechanism to recommend library resources for GE areas.
- The team identified from multiple sources the lack of cohesive, efficient, and effective messaging about the GE program and advising, and recommends cleaning the advising information available online and using proactive messaging, such as text messages and smartphone apps, to better reach students.