In January 2013, The California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees set the maximum number of units for a Baccalaureate degree at 180 quarter units. At the request of President Armstrong (Response to Legislative Action on Implementation of Trustees Title 5 Changes to Baccalaureate Degrees, April 23, 2013), the Academic Senate charged the General Education Governance Board (GEGB) to explore ways in which a creative solution within Cal Poly’s 72 unit General Education (GE) curriculum could be implemented to not only help high-unit programs achieve success in reducing units, but also find a solution that could be made available to other programs on campus, if desired.

During the final 6 weeks of Spring Quarter 2013, the GEGB met to discuss and investigate the ways in which programs could find a savings of four (4) units within the current GE template. The conversations led to many terrific dialogues around the table focused on the larger aspects of what our GE program at Cal Poly is, as well as what it should be. Additionally, the time also opened the door for other exciting ideas that could help shape GE as it heads into program review this coming academic year.

Following the President’s want to “enhance flexibility within programs and maintain a focus on learning outcomes while still retaining the 72-unit GE requirement” (Armstrong), the GEGB looked to language that exists within EO1065 (CSU General Education Breadth Requirements) as well as Cal Poly’s own GE requirements as a way in which programs might be able to achieve these above stated goals. As stated at Cal Poly, programs may utilize lower-division courses to fulfill both GE and major & support requirements. According to EO1065:

2.2.6 Double Counting

2.2.6.1 General Education, Major, and Other Requirements Through a process of campus-wide curriculum review and approval, campuses may permit the “double counting” of courses for General Education Breadth with major requirements and prerequisites only after giving careful consideration to the impact of such actions on general education programs (EO1065).
As a result, the committee found possible ways in which programs, in particular 180+ programs, might be able to take advantage of double-counting courses currently in their curriculum with the GE areas, such as Self-Development (D4) (CSU Area E Life Long Learning and Self-Development), as well as some in Political Economy (D2). The committee saw this as an opportunity for these interested programs to work with colleagues across disciplines/colleges, to create new partnerships for new stand-alone or cross-listed courses as well as collaborate with specific departments to adapt current major or support courses into GE certified options.

As an example, many of the high unit programs within the College of Engineering (CENG) have IME314 Engineering Economics as a part of their curriculum (either in support or technical elective areas). With some dialogue between programs, as well as guidance from the GEGB in terms of the necessary outcomes and criteria, a course like IME314 could have the potential to become a GE D2 option. This same type of strategy could also be used for transforming some other courses into GE equivalents.

Targeted double-counting, while not a clean, one-size-fits-all solution, does have the potential to create noticeable unit savings for several programs without cutting the required 72 unit requirements for GE OR changing the current objectives and criteria for the General Education Areas.

According to the Cal Poly Catalog and the Registrar’s Office, while new courses and changes to existing courses should be proposed during a catalog review cycle, it is understood that these types of proposed GE double-counting changes, most as a result of the CSU 180 unit mandate, are cases that warrant an exception and may be reviewed between catalogs.

If unit reduction does not involve proposing a new course for GE, then your department should continue to submit curriculum proposals to the Academic Senate Curriculum Committee (ASCC) by September 27, 2013 per the memo sent last spring. The ASCC reviews curriculum during the Fall 2013 term. Approved curricular revisions will be effective with the 2015-17 catalog.

If a unit reduction is dependent on a new course being approved for GE, then your department should submit the new course proposal by November 1, 2013. GEGB and ASCC will review course proposals and forward recommendations to the Academic Senate for approval by the end of Winter 2014 term. Newly approved GE courses will then be effective with the 2015-17 catalog. In Spring 2014, departments (via their college curriculum review process) should submit revised curriculum based upon approved GE course as part of their proposal for the 2015-17 catalog review cycle.

Please feel free to contact me for any questions you might have (jmachame@calpoly.edu, 756-5560).

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