

State of California

E - M E M O R A N D U M

General Education Governance Board

A committee of the Academic Senate

California Polytechnic State University

San Luis Obispo, California 93407

Date: 5/31/16

To: Provost Kathleen Enz Finken

From: Josh Machamer, Interim Chair, General Education Governance Board (GEGB)

CC: Gary Laver, Chair, Academic Senate
GEGB members (en masse)

Re: **Priorities related to GEGB Program Review and GE Task Force recommendations**

At the beginning of the Spring, you attended our GEGB meeting and spoke of the next steps involving GE here at Cal Poly. Specifically, you mentioned, in consultation with Gary Laver, the formation of a University-wide task force to 1). look at the recommendations related to the program review of GE and 2). formulate next steps. Per that conversation earlier this quarter, GEGB would like to submit our recommendations for consideration related to the priorities that this task force should consider and the representative make-up of the task force itself.

This list of key issues and priorities developed by GEGB during Spring Quarter 2016 are based upon discoveries made during the self-study process, as well as the response from the reviewers of the GE Program (also included within this memo). The priorities being provided to a yet-to-be-formed University-wide task force should consider these recommendations for the future of General Education at Cal Poly.

For reference, these are not ranked; in no particular order.

Priorities per GEGB

Perception of GE; Educating the campus

- Strengthening the role of advising for GE
- Managing the messaging/branding (ex. specificity/intentionality of flow charts, name change)
- Articulating the value of GE

Meaning-Making

- Intentionality of GE and Majors as collaborative partners in student learning; creating partners in the GE experience
- "Meaning-making" through GE pathways, patterns, minors, themes
- Integration of issues related to diversity/inclusivity, technology, etc.

Curricular Review

- Insure the strengthening of the GE curriculum
- Integration of previously approved GE PLOs
- GE course requirements & criteria/expected outcomes within GE Areas
 - (ex. writing within GE; does Area F account for a 21st century comprehensive polytechnic mindset)
- Investigation of a GE course review/renewal process; assurance of currency
 - (Are courses up-to-date? Are courses meeting requirements? – may partner with University Assessment efforts)
- Examine the Cal Poly structure/requirements of our GE compared to what is actually required by the CSU template (to investigate opportunities to create more flexibility in the pattern)
- Where and what are the future needs of Cal Poly students **and** how can GE be an instrument in facilitating those needs

Task Force recommended structure per GEGB

- Chair
- GEGB Chair
- GE admin support (ex officio)
- Director of the Writing Program
- Office of the Registrar
- 3 student representatives
 - (including native, transfer, & also possible recent alum; junior standing recommended)
- ASCC Chair
- 1 faculty member from each college
- 1 faculty member representing each GE Area (A, B, C, D, F) [recommended by GEGB]
- Advising*
- Career Services*
- International Center*
- OUDI

24 members

* at least one member representing PCS

Recommendations per the GE 2015/16 Program Review

- To facilitate more campus-wide understanding and embrace of GE goals, we recommend **sponsorship of cross-campus and cross-departmental forums** in which faculty—including both those teaching GE courses and those teaching only or predominantly major courses—can discuss the broader learning outcomes for all students and ways in which different parts of the curriculum contribute to advancing those outcomes. The goals of the forums would be to inform the process of improving GE and to help advance a culture-shift away from a focus on courses and requirements and toward a cooperative focus on what students are learning and how they are demonstrating their learning across the curriculum, not only in individual, discrete courses.
- To strengthen the relation between GE and the major, we recommend **building connections into the structures of both GE and major programs**. This is especially important at Cal Poly, where majors are central to the mission and students declare a major as part of the application process. This report has suggested several ways to begin creating those connections, such as having each major identify a writing intensive course and other places in the curriculum where foundational skills and knowledge are reinforced and/or incorporating assignments focused on the major within selected GE courses like Area D4 or an upper division GE capstone.
- To encourage students to select GE courses with greater intentionality, we suggest **providing opportunities for students to explore big questions that interest them from multiple disciplinary perspectives** across several GE areas. While we did not sense much faculty support for adopting a comprehensive GE pathways model like at CSU Chico, we heard interest in connecting courses by themes, whether through simple lists drawn from existing courses, inviting faculty to shape existing or new courses around a common topic, or supporting the development of interdisciplinary, team-taught courses. It would be valuable to consult students about what questions appeal to them.
- Even when students want to be more selective in choosing GE courses, they face barriers such as a narrow range of options in some subareas, limited space in preferred courses, and scheduling conflicts with major courses. We encourage Cal Poly to **increase flexibility** in requirements, availability of popular courses, and scheduling conflicts with major courses. Possible ways to make requirements more flexible include reducing the number of subcategories in Areas C and D and eliminating Area F. CSU guidelines for GE specify only two subcategories in Area C – Arts and Humanities and none in Area D. (Cal Poly's Area D4 actually fulfills a CSU Area E requirement, so should not be eliminated.) There is no CSU Area F requirement. We heard from various sources that many majors already include extensive attention to technology. The technology learning objectives could be covered by having majors identify a technology-intensive course. Increasing flexibility through changes in course availability and scheduling would require more precise enrollment data analysis.
- We recommend encouraging faculty to **incorporate more "Learn-by-Doing" pedagogies in GE courses**. This can promote greater student engagement, better understanding of the relevance of course content, and increased awareness of connections between GE and their majors. Professional learning opportunities, stipends, and other incentives for experimentation can help to support course redesign.

- To increase students' recognition of the value of GE, we recommend **identifying ways to make the goals of GE more transparent**. We learned that GE is discussed at student orientation, faculty are expected to make course learning objectives visible to students, and the PLOs have been posted on the campus website. These are useful, but a more comprehensive strategy should be developed, using student-friendly language and explicitly linking the goals with employer expectations. For example, they could also be communicated through a first-year experience course, Areas A1 or D4 courses and/or introductory courses in the major. The Student Affairs division can reinforce PLOs through the Career Center, advising, and co-curricular programs. Transparency within GE (and other) courses can also improve student learning, as demonstrated by the Transparency in Learning and Teaching Project at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (<https://www.unlv.edu/provost/transparency>).
- We agree with the self-study goal to **continue to assess GE learning outcomes**. The current model seems clear and sustainable in core areas reviewed by WASC (except information literacy). It could be strengthened by obtaining more representative samples of student work artifacts. Cal Poly should also consider expanding the model to cover the DLOs. A more ambitious goal would be to identify a place in the curriculum – either in an upper division GE capstone course, the required senior project in the major, or an ePortfolio – to assess integrative and applied learning, the PLOs, and/or the ULOs. This would also be useful for accreditation purposes, responding to the WASC “Meaning, Quality, and Integrity of Degrees” standard.
- As proposed in the self-study, we encourage **development and implementation of a “GE Course Renewal” process** to ensure that approved GE courses address area and program objectives and meet other key criteria such as class size and writing. The self-study noted that the GE PLOs were recently developed and have not yet been incorporated into the course proposal process. The PLOs should also be included in the renewal process.

Thank you for your time and attention to this. Please feel free to contact me for any questions you might have (jmachame@calpoly.edu, 756-5560).



Josh Machamer
Interim Chair, GEGB
Chair & Professor of Theatre Arts