

# Minutes from the Town Hall Meeting: ASCSU Task Force Report March 7, 2019

ATTENDEES: Sylvia Alva, Suketu Bhavsar, Ingrid Cantrell, Christina Chavez-Reyes, Won Choi, Kristen Conway-Gomez, Sandy Dixon, Sep Eskandari, Keith Forward, Briana Foster-Greenwood, Claudia Garcia-Des Lauriers, Michael Giang, Hend Gilli-Elewy, Michael Godfrey, Hilary Haakenson, Shonn Haren, Jill Hargis, David Horner, Mahmood Ibrahim, Hyoung Soo Kim, Craig LaMunyon, Alyssa Lang, Daniel Lewis, John Lloyd, Eddie Mao, Jocelyn Pacleb, Jeff Passe, Amanda Podany, Alex Small, Ken Stahl, Rachel Van, Zuoyue Wang

Academic Senate Chair Shen introduced herself and welcomed all in attendance. She explained that the reason the town hall meeting is being held is to have a discussion and gather feedback on the newly released report from the Academic Senate of the California State University (ASCSU) GE Task Force. The ASCSU is composed of faculty from the 23 CSU campuses; Cal Poly Pomona has two (2) representatives on the ASCSU, Dr. David Speak, and Dr. Gwen Urey. The task force was created a few years ago and has recently completed their work, which is a series of recommendations for changing GE. Academic Senate Chair Shen stated that there has been some confusion on what the report is supposed to do; the report was released a couple of months early, the original release date was May 2019, but it was released in February, and the ASCSU has communicated that they are not going to take any official action until October or November 2019. In addition, the Chancellor's Office has said that they are not going to take any action until they hear from the ASCSU. Cal Poly Pomona is taking advantage of the early release of the report and gather faculty feedback to create a campus level response to present to the ASCSU.

Academic Senate Chair Shen introduced ASCSU Senator Speak. Senator Speak stated that part of the conversation needs to be about the nature of the CSU. He stated that the CSU can be characterized two (2) different ways:

1. A set of 23 different universities gathered together in a system, or
2. A university with 23 campuses.

Dr. Speak went on to say that neither one of those characterizations is simply accurate, but to what extent do we need to think in terms of a university with 23 campuses or, alternatively, 23 universities gathered together into a system. The ASCSU, which has representatives from all 23 CSU campuses, created a task force to look at General Education. Dr. Speak stated that his interpretation of how that task force worked is just his view of the task force and is not the view of the ASCSU. The GE Task Force thought that the conversation on GE would be controversial, they worked out of the spotlight; their meetings were not secretive, but neither were they open meetings. Sometime earlier in the academic year, the committee received a public records request, and it is Dr. Speak's opinion that that request circumnavigated the committee's method of operation, which resulted in the task force completing their report ahead of schedule. The task force report goes to the ASCSU, then the ASCSU determines what it wants to do with the task force recommendations and forwards its recommendations, in terms of resolutions, to the Chancellor's Office.

Dr. Speak communicated that this is complicated history because after the creation of the task force, came Executive Orders (EOs) 1100 revised and 1110, which are clearly built on the

model of a university with 23 campuses. According to Dr. Speak the Chancellor's Office felt a need to issue EOs 1100 and 1110 on an expedited time table. Dr. Speak voiced, that many people, including himself, think that the expedited time table was not justified and caused unnecessary problems. The Chancellor's Office felt the repercussions of its actions, and in an oral conversation with the members of the ASCSU agreed to not issue any new executive orders until after the ASCSU provides a response to the task force report. The ASCSU at their March 13, 2019 meeting will formally receive the GE Task Force Report, assign it to a committee, and then begin to receive feedback. Senator Speak believes that the ASCSU will start working on the report in November 2019 which provides sufficient time for the campus to provide feedback on the report.

Dr. Speak expressed that, in his opinion, the first thing that should be done is "to think about GE". He stressed that the room is full of academics and that is what we do, "think about GE". He divulged that there was a comment made in the Chancellor's Office that there has been nothing done with GE in 50 years, so this was overdue. Senator Speak emphatically stated that no campus has failed to engage in active, detailed conversation about GE during that period and especially during the last 5 or 6 years. The comment is a reflection that the system has not imposed any new GE standards in the last 50 years. It is Dr. Speak's opinion that this is the way it should be, but he does not think that it will stay that way. He gave an example on why he thinks this saying that there are bright, hard-working, ambitious academics working in the Chancellor's Office, but how are they going to demonstrate that they have done anything if each campus continues to work independently. You make an impression by creating something that becomes a system wide model. Dr. Speak expressed that he likes Chancellor White and he finds him a very student and faculty orientated Chancellor, but even the Chancellor is quick to remind people that he has multiple constituencies. He is an at-will employee for the Board of Trustees. The CSU does not enjoy the constitutional insulation that the University of California (UC) System does, and so the legislature writes a law, the CSU System has to follow the law. Senator Speak mentioned that he gave Provost Alva a list of 78 bills that are currently before the legislature having to do with the CSU.

Senator Speak recommends that the body think seriously about GE but also think seriously about how to make the argument that Cal Poly Pomona's GE is different from GE at other CSU campuses and that it is better having been developed at Cal Poly Pomona. So therefore there needs to be two (2) messages:

- Response to the recommendations in the GE Task Force Report
- Communicate that GE curriculum should be the purview of the individual campuses

Dr. Speak voiced that the campus needs to be able to communicate clearly and justify why Cal Poly Pomona is best served by having the flexibility to craft its own General Education curriculum. This can only be done if there is a serious conversation about GE, but if the conversation is only about the substance then the bigger message will not be sent.

Dr. Laura Massa, Associate Vice President of Academic Programs, went over the PowerPoint presentation detailing the ASCSU Task Force Report. The report is located on the Academic Senate Website at <https://www.cpp.edu/~senate/town-hall-presentation-on-task-force-suggestion-3-5-19.pdf>.



Dr. Massa reminded everyone that current GE program at Cal Poly Pomona is a total of 48 units with unlimited double counting and has the following GE area requirements:

A	B	C	D	E
English Language Communication & Critical Thinking	Scientific Inquiry & Quantitative Reasoning	Arts & Humanities	Social Sciences	Lifelong Learning & Self-Development
9 units	12 units	12 units	12 units	3 units
1. Oral Communication 2. Written Communication 3. Critical Thinking	1. Physical Sciences 2. Life Sciences 3. Lab Activity 4. Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning 5. Science & Technology Synthesis (upper division)	1. Visual & Performing Arts 2a. Philosophy & Civilization 2b. Literature & Language Other than English 3. Arts & Humanities Synthesis (upper division)	1. U.S. History American Ideals 2. U.S. Constitution & California Government 3. Social Sciences: Principles, Methodologies, Value Systems, & Ethics 4. Social Science Synthesis (upper division)	

Double counting means that students can take courses that fulfill a major requirement and a GE requirement. Therefore, while the requirement is 48 units it does not necessarily mean that the student has taken 48 units in GE, they may have taken units that count in multiple places. AVP Massa commented that the strategic plan talks about revitalizing CPP's GE. There have been initial steps take to do this; Dr. Massa communicated that the Provost has asked herself and the College of Letters, Arts, and Social Sciences Dean, Iris Levine, to lead a committee to think about and discuss the meaning and purpose of general education. The goal of the committee is to come up with a statement about what GE means to the campus; what make GE unique and purposeful at CPP.

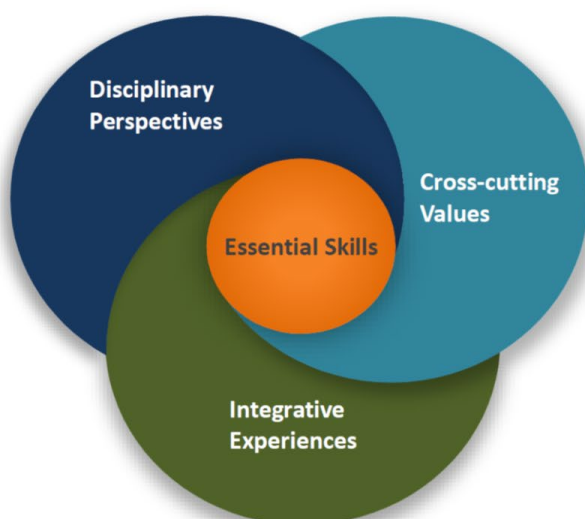
Dr. Massa presented that the guiding principles of the GE Task Force were that the GE program:

1. Must be a CSU system wide program
2. Must align with curricula offered by CA Community Colleges and the UC System
3. Should meet the three (3) goals of higher education:
  - a. Proficiency with fundamental skills
  - b. Familiarization with "ways of knowing"
  - c. Enhancement of dispositions of an engage citizenry
4. Should contain clear learning outcomes
5. Course offerings should allow for appropriate campus autonomy to express uniqueness and strengths of campus
6. Should be coherent, easy to navigate & provide high quality learning experiences
7. Should lead to persistence to degree completion and increased confidence in students' ability to succeed in college
8. Should be delivered in context relevant to students (e.g., through "themes" or "pathways" on a topic of significance)
9. And related graduation requirement should be proportionate to number of required units for entire undergraduate curriculum
10. Should consist of highest-quality educational experiences and high-impact practices: encouraging multi-disciplinary efforts, establishing student-student and student-faculty interaction, amplifying the creativity and energy of faculty, instilling curiosity in students, and enhancing their joy of learning.

The ASCSU GE Task Force had the following primary goals:

1. *Decrease the total number of GE units.* The recommendation has 42 units instead of 48. This was done to bring the CSU in alignment with the national trends in higher education.
2. *Eliminate “double-counting”.* There is the idea that if students are taking courses that satisfy both GE and their major requirements there is a loss of coherence and meaningfulness of the GE program. There is a statement in the report that when courses can be double-counted it becomes more of a “box checking” exercise to see which requirements can be satisfied in the most efficient way and the students do not get a meaningful GE experience.
3. *Minimize number of non-major requirements outside of GE* by incorporating them into GE program. These are requirements such as American Institutions, First Year Experience, etc.
4. *Leverage upper-division GE as the way students synthesize learning and demonstrate mastery of skills, disciplinary knowledge, and value embed throughout the program.* Upper division becomes more like a “capstone” learning experience.

Dr. Massa explained how the following image represents the framework of GE program.



#### Essential Skills:

Foundation of a college education and lifelong learning (i.e., Golden four)

#### Disciplinary Perspectives:

Core concepts, habits of mind, methods of inquiry & ways of understanding specific to disciplines

#### Cross-Cutting Values:

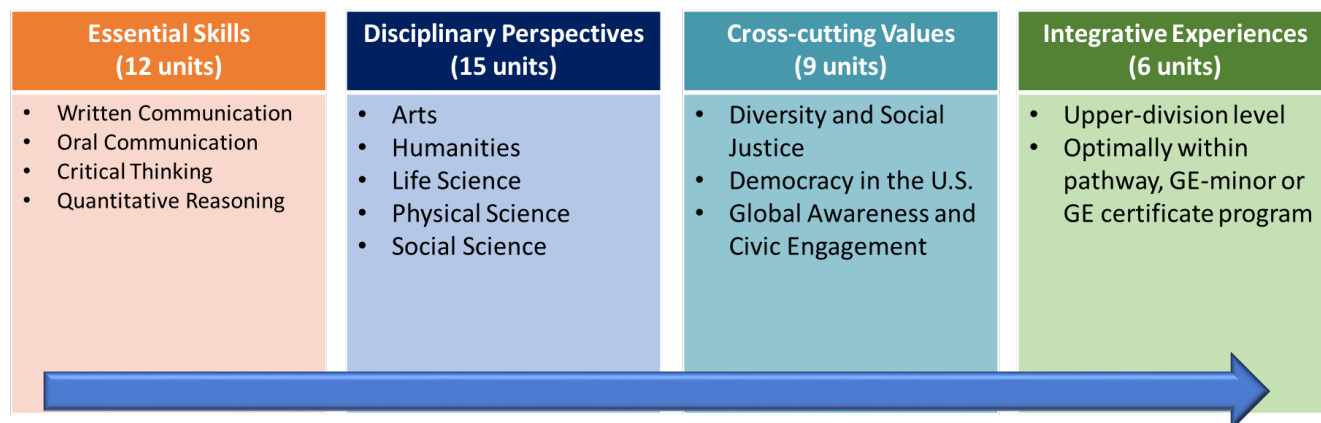
Broad, multifaceted dimensions that reflect mission of CSU and distinctive values of each campus

#### Integrative Experiences:

Upper-division connection of the Essential Skills, Disciplinary Perspectives and Cross-cutting values

At the core of the diagram are the **Essential Skills** which make up the nucleus of GE and serve as the foundation of the college education and lifelong learning. Traditionally considered the “Golden Four” – quantitative reasoning, written communication, oral communication, and critical thinking.

The GE Task Force suggested structure diagram is below; Dr. Massa added the arrow to the diagram to illustrate that students start early in their freshman year with *Essential Skills*, and then build up to the *Disciplinary Perspectives* and *Cross-cutting Values*, and finally to *Integrative Experiences*. The report notes that information literacy should be a part of the essential skills, but it should be folded into each of the essential skills.



**Total: 42 Units**

The *Disciplinary Perspectives* is five (5) courses in five (5) very broad categories. The idea is that students practice the essential skills in these disciplines, for example, humanities courses reinforce how critical thinking and quantitative reasoning is used in their discipline.

Then you move to *Cross-cutting Values*, where the students start to understand that multiple disciplines and multiple viewpoints are important. Dr. Massa commented that Cal Poly Pomona as a campus should be able to identify and define these courses in light of our institutional values. The task force stresses that these categories can come from multiple perspectives. Dr. Massa stated that the only category that the report lists disciplines for is “Democracy in the U.S.” where it is stated that these are history and government classes. “Diversity and Social Justice” can contain courses in cultural diversity, cultural competency, human rights, etc. The “Global Awareness and Civic Engagement” area is to expose students to issues occurring in the world around them, economic, social, and political. It is important that students take what they have learned and apply it to the issues.

Finally students will take the upper division *Integrative Experiences* courses. There are two (2) classes required but they do not have class categories listed. This area is envisioned to promote the main objectives of providing breadth, depth, intentionality, and campus autonomy to the GE program.

There is the potential for interdisciplinary pathway minors and certificates which would be connected by a shared theme, problem, or issue relevant to a *cross-cutting value*. The GE Minor is 18 units (6 courses) that would include:

- one *Essential Skills* course (3 units), e.g., in the Critical Thinking category
- one *Disciplinary Perspectives* course (3 units), e.g., social and economic sustainability, art and social justice
- two *Cross-cutting Values* courses (6 units), and
- two *Integrative Experiences* courses (6 units), one of which serves as a capstone experience.

The GE Certificate is 9 units (3 courses) which would be the best option for transfer students and includes at least one *Cross-cutting Values* course and two *Integrative Experiences*, with one of those serving as a capstone.

Dr. Massa explained that the GE Minor and Certificate would facilitate learning communities/cohorts; students would have the opportunity to take classes together, study

together, build understanding together, and develop connections with each other and the campus, all of which are practices that are known to increase student success.

Dr. Massa went over some of the other considerations that the Task Force Report discusses:

- Students should be able to see the purpose and value of GE program
  - Shift from checklist of categories to logical progression of skills and knowledge development and integration
- Transfer students would still be “GE certified” with 36 units
  - Need to complete the 6-upper division units following transfer
- Allows for/encourages “carve outs” to capture graduation requirements
  - Intentionally embed requirements such as American Institutions, diversity, modern languages, etc.
- Allows First-Year Experience to be embedded
  - For example, include via Essential Skills course(s)

The remainder of the town hall meeting was used to gather feedback from the participants.

Alex Small, Assistant Professor of Physics and Astronomy, commented that reducing the number of GE units by 6 units will prompt departments to add 6 units to their majors. His concern is the GE courses that were removed will be replaced with major courses that will be harder for students to get into and major courses are perceived as harder than GE courses. He asked if there had been any thought to the consequences of the recommendations in the GE Task Force Report.

Craig LaMunyon, Associate Dean in the College of Science and former Biology Department Chair, stated that if the proposed changes are implemented, with the current double counting of 11 units and the reduction of GE units by 6, biology would have a deficit of 5 units. He went on to say that with a program like biology it does not make any sense to not to consider freshman-level biology as a GE requirement for science, and not to count chemistry or physics, which are requirements for biology majors, as a physical science.

Zuoyue Wang, Professor of History, commented that in his reading of the report it would be possible for a student to avoid taking any U.S. History in the “Democracy in the U.S.” category if they used the 3 units required to take an American Government course. He made three (3) points:

1. It is possible for an international student to obtain a degree from the CSU system, an American education, without ever have taken a course in American history. He feels that American history is a crucial for international students.
2. Dr. Wang stated that in his opinion the tone of the report is that CSU students should not be burdened with the luxury on a liberal education.
3. American history courses at the college level are different than the American history courses taught at the high school level. American history courses at the college level are integrated with other courses in college which is not the case in high school.

Christina Chavez-Reyes, Chair of Liberal Studies, stated that because of the size of the major and pre-credential students who will become elementary educators use the double counting of GE courses, through recommended advising, to extend the program to get the subject matter competency that they need to become elementary school teachers. Without double counting, all those type of courses will fall back to the department who will not be able to accommodate that work and there will be no program. In 2016, the California Commission on Teacher

Credentialing, opened this pre-credential option as another pathway, in addition to passing the California Subject Examinations for Teachers (CSET), because of the tremendous teacher shortage. Her opinion is that there are a lot of program structures that this report does not take into consideration. As a faculty member that teaches an interdisciplinary capacity regularly, this idea of integration is not something that happens magically. Faculty need to work at developing this capacity in their own practice, but also students have to have the perception that it is a valuable methodology to help them learn. Students have just come from high school, they still think that everything comes in boxes that they can stack and build a college degree to a career, so there is a lot of socialization that has not been considered in this report, about how interdisciplinary methods are integrated into instruction and learning.

She added that this is the first year that she has taught two (2) sessions of the First Year Experience course and she discovered how different she is from the students coming into the university. There is a lot in these recommendations that speaks to what motivates students to learn. Therefore, we need to reconcile the way degrees are structured with how today's students are learning.

Suketu Bhavsar, Honors College Director, and Professor in Physics and Astronomy, observed that the concerns are because how our majors are structured in the context of GE. If one of the purposes of GE is for something unexpected to happen for the student while taking GE, then assigning students GE courses that are needed for their major does not accomplish this.

Jeff Passe, Dean of CEIS, would like to know more about the rationale behind no double counting. He stated that in his view double counting encourages interdisciplinary studies which is a hallmark of what we are all about. Interdisciplinary studies puts things in the bigger context, e.g., if you are taking a history course or communications course it is tied in to another course that is relevant. If you separate those out it becomes irrelevant unless of course it is tied to the GE Minor or Certificate.

Sandy Dixon, Interim Chair of Ethnic and Women's Studies, would like to hear more about minimizing the number of non-major requirements outside of GE, especially First Year Experience. At Cal Poly Pomona we have programs that help and encourage our students to excel before they actually become a full time student, so why is this something that should be minimized?

John Lloyd, Professor of History, commented that he thinks there is much of interest in this report, but wanted to raise a concern in terms of the premise of the committee. The report implies GE should be fun, which implies it is not fun now. Professor Lloyd stated that he has taught GE courses for 25 years and he loves it and he thinks his students love it but we seem to be arguing that we are failing and he is not sure he agrees, which raises the question – why are we doing this? He is most concerned about the reduction of GE units in the name of efficiency, which is narrowing the scope of what students get from higher education.

Senator Speak stated that it is important to recognize with all of these issues there are tradeoffs. With double counting you have the possibility that a student never leaves their college because all of their GE units are double counted with their major units. Professor Wang's concern about U.S. History is not because he is worried about losing sections, it is because he has a lifetime of experience to know how important it is. Dr. Speak went on to say that when he talks about the importance of American Government it is not because he wants to teach another class on the subject. He commented that it is important in your response to remember the tradeoffs and make a sophisticated response. This task force report is, quite clearly, not a single



consciousness with a single aim. There are clearly tensions that were extent on the task force that are reflected in this report. Remember that the constituencies that the Chancellor answers to, the Board of Trustees and the legislature, think in terms of efficiency terms; how are serve the 10,000s of students who are eligible to get into the system who did not get in? It is harder for them to think in the same terms as academics. Our responses do need to address the tradeoffs.

Mahmood Ibrahim, Professor of History and Chair of the Academic Senate General Education Committee, addressed several issues in the report:

1. The assumption that GE is stagnating – the campus re-vamped the GE document in the process of converting from quarters to semesters. It addressed various modalities of teaching, on-line teaching, hybrid teaching, etc. Interdisciplinary upper division GE is addressed in the GE document.
2. The reduction in units has the adverse effect of students not being able to take courses in a wide range of disciplines.
3. Pre-credential students have to be introduced to many disciplines and this can only be done with double counting. The loss of double counting will add additional semesters.

Jocelyn Pacleb, Professor in Ethnic and Women's Studies, voiced a concern about the reduction of GE units. When students take GE courses outside of their main discipline they gain and understanding of the bigger picture. She is concerned that the reduction in GE units to 42 will create a "turf war" where disciplines will want to protect their disciplines and not facilitate the types of discussions that need to be had in regards to preparing the next generation of citizens.

Claudia Garcia-Des Lauriers, Assistant Professor in Geography and Anthropology, asked to what degree are we working with the Community Colleges and UCs regarding articulation for transferability? Her concern is that the CSUs are sandwiched in between the two interests and are bearing the brunt or the work to align GE requirements for articulation.

Suketu Bhavsar, Honors College Director, and Professor in Physics and Astronomy, ended the session with a story of Steve Jobs, Co-founder of Apple. Steve Jobs while address the Stanford graduating class commented that the meaningful class he took was calligraphy and that is why the Mac is the way it is. He had the luxury of not being bound by discipline because he had dropped out of college and only took classes he wanted to take, and the rest is history.

Academic Senate Chair Shen thanked all in attendance encouraged all to submit their feedback via the online form at [https://cpp.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_cNG5BUSQCRTfKWF](https://cpp.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_cNG5BUSQCRTfKWF).