

On March 21, 2019, the Chair of the Academic Senate at Cal Poly Pomona charged the General Education Committee with drafting our Campus response to the ASCSU General Education Task Force Report. The General Education Committee consulted several documents to draft this response: The ASCSU GETF Recommendations, the minutes of the GE Town Hall meeting of 3/7/2019 and Campus on-line comments, Open Letter to the ASCSU from CSU Chairs of History and Political Science Departments, letter from the Executive Committee of the California History/ Social Science Project , and a letter from the History Department. The Committee's observations are as follows:

1. **The ASCSU General Education Task Force report is a radical solution in search of a problem, based on unfounded assumptions.** While it is true that the General Education framework of the CSU has not been drastically overhauled in the past half century, the report insinuates that General Education in the CSU is an ossified relic, frozen in much the same form as it was at its inception. Such a claim suggests an ignorance of the recent history of the program. In the past ten years the System-wide GE program has been the subject of serious alterations to bring it into line with AAC&U's LEAP initiative. Far from being a fossilized and inert program GE in the CSU has adapted to major changes in higher education and remains current in content and in modalities of instruction. The GE program at Cal Poly Pomona, for example, contains all the best practices that the report advocates. The report, furthermore, provides no convincing justification as to why the continued adaptation of this program is less desirable than the radical restructuring they propose.
2. **We recognize that we are one campus among a 23-Campus system.** This does not mean, however, that we are all the same or that we should be the same. Each campus is responsible for its curriculum within the broad structure articulated by the Executive Orders. Outside efforts

to homogenize the various campuses in the CSU is counter-productive and denies campus autonomy.

3. **The proposed removal of double-counting of courses in GE fails to consider the effect this will have on majors and programs.** While the reasons given by the report for the removal of double-counting are understandable, and appear reasonable at first glance, they ignore some fundamental realities about the way majors and programs are structured and implemented on the various CSU Campuses. As the number of units for all majors are capped by Executive Order, double counting has become necessary in order to allow students to take the courses they need while fulfilling GE requirements. If double-counting were removed, numerous majors would have to drastically restructure their curriculum, potentially at the expense of their accreditation. Furthermore, students within these majors would now be expected to take extra units to fulfill their GE requirements in addition to fulfilling their major course work. This would have the combined deleterious effect of both unfairly penalizing the majors in the affected disciplines, while the requirement to take extra units would delay their graduation and therefore is inimical to the goals laid out for Graduation Initiative 2025. In addition to the cost and time to degree, elimination of double counting would make some programs, such as the pre-credentialing programs, virtually impossible to run since many of the requirements are folded into General Education. Additional expense will also be incurred by the recommendation that certain topics, such as information literacy, be integrated into all Essential Skills classes. The recommendation does not provide guidelines for such a process nor does the report provide the sources of funding for such efforts.
4. **Departments and programs reliant on GE will suffer disproportionately from this radical restructuring.** The new framework eliminates several established General Education subareas, (as well as totally dissolving GE Area E), leaving several departments and programs with no

established home in a new GE program. The dislocation of these courses within the GE program will likely lead to a scramble by departments and programs to embed their courses into the newly established areas, resulting in an unnecessary increase in inter-departmental rivalry as the same number of parties struggle over pieces of a drastically re-sized and reapportioned pie. Furthermore, the elimination of the Lifelong Learning area from General Education (Area E) removes a significant number of courses from General Education that epitomize its key value, that the things one learns as a university student are designed to enrich and inspire one's life far beyond one's graduation. Elimination of Area E with its emphasis on life-long learning is counter to the purpose of General Education altogether.

5. **The proposed Disciplinary Perspectives section is too narrow.** Requiring only 15 units (one course in the Arts, Humanities, Social Sciences, Life Sciences and Physical Sciences) leaves students with only the barest understanding and appreciation of a single facet of these complex and rich areas of study. A single history course cannot be said to provide a student with a full appreciation of the theory, methods and modes of inquiry in the humanities any more than a single Political Science course could be said to do so for the Social Sciences. Calling this section "disciplinary perspectives" is deceptive and disingenuous at best since one course is woefully insufficient to expose students to a variety of disciplines and different ways of knowing. The implementation of such a model of General Education encourages a "box-checking" approach that undermines the meaning and purpose of General Education, a practice that the recommendation is ostensibly against
6. **The recommendation claims that American Institutions requirement (AI) has been folded into General Education as an innovation and thus saving on GE units.** This is blatantly not true since the practice has been to count AI as part of GE as EO 1100R and its precursors allowed. The GE Task Force recommendation contravenes Title 5 of the California Education Code and EO 1061

that allows up to six units (two courses) to implement this statute. One course in “democracy in the U. S.” is so inadequate, especially in these times.

7. **Finally, while the task force report suggests some interesting ideas, it fails to understand some of the key motivations that guide student selection of GE courses.** To provide a single example, the proposal of GE pathways to provide coherence to a student’s GE experience is a good idea, and one that is currently utilized at CSU Chico. However, as administration at our sister campus will also note, the students generally don’t complete their pathways, as the exigencies of needing courses and units that work with their schedules trump their desire for a coherent experience.

The ASCSU General Education Task Force has submitted a bold plan to reform GE on a system-wide basis. While we disagree with their proposal, we recognize that it came from an urgent sense of concern about the continued relevance of General Education and a desire to ensure that it continues to play a role in the lives of our students for years to come. We agree that students and others outside of academia often do not appreciate the purpose of General Education and that a better job ought to be done emphasizing the importance of this program to both students and faculty. The value and purpose of GE, furthermore, could be emphasized during university orientation of incoming freshmen. Justifying GE to these groups will be significantly easier under our current, well established and flexible system, rather than an experimental and potentially expensive system that has not proven its worth.

Mahmood Ibrahim

On behalf of the GE Committee