

MEMORANDUM

GEC's three-year progress report

Date: July 20, 2021

TO:

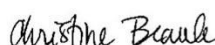
Michael Bruno, Provost

Paul McKimmy, Chair, University of Hawai'i Mānoa Faculty Senate Executive Committee

FROM:

Jonathan Pettit, Chair, General Education Committee

Christine Beaulé, Director, General Education Office



SUBJECT:

General Education Program Review Three-Year Progress Report

BACKGROUND

The General Education Committee (GEC), a permanent committee of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Faculty Senate (MFS), sets the policies and procedures that govern implementation and assessment of General Education (Gen Ed) requirements. The General Education Office (GEO), housed administratively in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs/Provost (OVCAA), soon to be reconfigured as the Office of the Vice Provost of Academic Excellence (OVPAE), implements those requirements in accordance with the policies and procedures set by the GEC.

The first comprehensive assessment of the current Gen Ed curriculum since its implementation in 2000 was conducted in AY 2017–18, which included detailed internal and external reviews. This document provides a three-year progress report, which will be integrated into the five-year academic program review process; the next program review will be conducted in AY 2022–23. The dual purpose of this report is to show how the GEC has considered and acted upon the recommendations of the external review team which evaluated UHM's current general education program, and to make recommendations about future goals for our faculty members. Their [External Review Report](#), released at the end of AY 2017–18, identified problems in our current practice that are having a negative impact on our students' engagement and success. UHM faculty, according to the report, tend to compartmentalize learning into different "requirement buckets" that pose major hurdles to graduate. Furthermore, the team found that there are redundancies in some areas of the curriculum that are detrimental to student learning and overall experience.

This external report also included recommendations on how to strengthen our general education program. They underscored the need to “boldly reimagine” general education at UHM by foregrounding our students’ experience. A student-centered model would build key competencies and skills in students in more deliberate and strategic ways. This new program would support a student's sense of belonging through place-based traditions and learning. Such values, wrote the team, could be integrated into the general education program for both first-year and transfer students, by embedding skills development in research themes and complex issues. All of this would make the UHM campus a place that welcomes students to campus, and fosters learning communities.

In the past three years, the GEC has worked tirelessly to respond to the report. We created three working groups (subcommittees) to look at different aspects of the report: the Assessment Working Group (AWG), the Curriculum Working Group (CWG), and the Governance Working Group (GWG). These working groups, in close collaboration with the GEO and the six Gen Ed Boards, have built a clear vision for our general education program (see Mission-Vision-Values statement on the Gen Ed website’s [home page](#)), developed student learning outcomes for all areas of the general education curriculum (except Hawaiian/Second Language), and supported implementation of an institution-wide assessment program. We have also revised a new governance document and agreed upon a new MOU with the Senate Executive Committee (SEC), the General Education Office, six Gen Ed Boards, and OVCAA this past spring. Finally, we have spent the past semester considering core competencies that might be used in boldly imagining a new future for general education at UHM. This report outlines the painstaking work that the GEC has done in the past three years to respond to the external report. We conclude by noting some ways that we can more effectively build a new program in the coming years.

ASSESSMENT

The external report noted that the GEC needed to provide a stronger leadership for the direction of assessment of our general education program. The team said that the effectiveness of the general education curriculum was based largely on perceptions (e.g., anecdotes, personal interactions). At the time, it seemed as though the Steering Committee thought it would be best to make smaller modifications to the existing general education curriculum and governance structure. The external team advised us to implement a comprehensive, program assessment plan and measure if students are learning what we want them to learn. Where are they mastering the learning? Where are the gaps in their learning?

In Spring 2019, the GEC established an Assessment Working Group (AWG), which worked with the GEO’s Assessment Coordinator to develop the seven-year [Gen Ed Assessment](#)

[Plan](#) that was approved by the GEC at the end of Spring 2019. The reviewers suggested that a starting point for assessment was to frame student learning outcomes (SLOs) to answer the question: “What are faculty expectations for what students will learn and be able to do?” The GEC therefore started developing student learning outcomes for all Foundations and Focus areas in spring 2018 (these were approved by the GEC May 4, 2018) and completed GE outcomes with those for Diversification areas in spring 2020. The Focus SLOs were added by all Gen Ed Focus boards to their proposal processes and forms in AY 2018-2019. As part of the FG Assessment Project and a desire to better align Gen Ed with UHM’s Institutional Learning Outcomes, the FG SLOs were revisited and revised through discussions in the FG Faculty Learning Community; these were finalized and approved by the GEC on [May 8, 2020](#). The revised FG SLOs were incorporated into the proposal process for new and renewal FG courses by the Foundations Board for use going forward. The Diversification SLOs (one set for each designation: DA, DH, DL, DS, DB, DP, and DY) were approved by the GEC on [December 17, 2020](#). Implementation of the plan began in AY20 with Foundations-Global and Multicultural Perspectives and will continue in AY21 with Hawaiian, Asian, & Pacific Issues and Diversification courses. Figure 1 shows the assessment timeline.

Figure 1: GE Assessment Schedule, 2019–26

GE Assessment	2019-2020		2020-2021		2021-2022		2022-2023		2023-2024		2024-2025		2025-2026	
	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring	Fall	Spring
Global and Multicultural Perspectives (FG)														
Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Issues (HAP)														
Diversification														
Critical Thinking														
Contemporary Ethical Issues (E)														
Oral Communication (O)														
Quantitative Reasoning (FQ)														
Information Literacy														
Foundations Written Communication (FW)														
Focus Writing Intensives (W/WI)														
	• GEO plans assessment in conjunction with appropriate GE board.													
	• Faculty professional development is offered to prepare faculty for assessment.													
	• Instructors teach courses. Artifacts are collected for the GEO.													
	• Artifacts are assessed. Assessment coordinator aggregates findings and prepares report for GEC.													
	• Discuss results with appropriate GE board. GEC makes recommendations to improve curriculum through faculty governance. Action plan is created. Instructors incorporate changes to support the GEO.													
	• Ongoing teaching and faculty professional development offered.													

[FG Assessment Project](#)

The first assessment project undertaken by the GEO and GEC was focused on Global and Multicultural Perspectives. The GEO led an internal survey of students. In the first semester, the majority of student respondents had a positive conception of their understanding and

appreciation for diverse cultures. In the first survey, students were asked to rate themselves “compared to the average person of your age in understanding/appreciating diverse philosophies, peoples, and cultures.” Over 60% said that they were ‘above average’ compared to their peers in appreciation, while less than 5% believed they were ‘below average’. Fewer students were confident about their understanding of diverse cultures – only about 35% rated themselves ‘above average’.

After this survey, the AWG worked alongside the GEO to form an FG Faculty Learning Community. These were regular faculty meetings (5–6 per semester) to determine the new student learning objectives (SLO) for FG courses, which drew on AAC&U VALUE rubrics for Intercultural Knowledge and Competencies and Global Learning, as well as the Interstate Passport’s learning outcomes. After meeting nearly a dozen times, the learning community finalized the revised version of the SLOs for FG courses. After this, the AWG hosted two book discussions with FG Faculty Learning Community members from Mānoa and Leeward Community College. These discussions helped FG faculty members determine what they are doing well at UH, and where improvement is needed. The sessions focused on the books’ themes and how they applied to the teaching and learning of FG. The FG Faculty Learning Community members were encouraged to bring a reading, assignment, or other course material from an FG designated course that represented a theme(s) from each book. Constructive feedback was shared so that members walked away from the discussions with ideas to enhance their courses. In the wake of these meetings and the need to better support faculty in teaching Oceanic cultures as part of FG courses, the AWG co-hosted a Center for Teaching Excellence workshop featuring four speakers. Several FG Faculty Learning Community members agreed to submit student artifacts for our assessment project from their fall 2020 courses. The artifacts will be scored in summer 2021, and the results compiled in a report due in fall 2021. These assessment results will be used to develop targeted teaching workshops and other forms of pedagogical support to improve student learning.

[HAP Assessment Project](#)

The assessment of the Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Issues (HAP) courses was greatly aided by a student [survey](#) conducted by the Assessment and Curriculum Support Center, conducted in 2010–16. This study found that the largest percentage of students reported learning “a lot” and “a moderate amount” during the first three semesters. HAP Courses are currently offered in a total of 27 departments or programs, such as Ethnic Studies, English, the Center for Pacific Island Studies, Education, etc. This study confirmed that the more students enrolled in a HAP course, the more who perceived learning, and that courses across the UHM curriculum were including Native Hawaiian culture/issues in their course content.

The earlier study of HAP courses helped shape the conversations of the HAP Faculty Learning Community (FLC), which included more than a dozen faculty members from a variety of disciplines who have experience teaching HAP designated courses. During HAP FLC meetings, faculty members were encouraged to share their disciplinary expertise and instructional experience to guide the development of an assessment of HAP's fourth learning outcome (that students "demonstrate respect and empathy as defined by the Indigenous peoples of Hawai'i and the Pacific and/or Asia in interpersonal and intergroup relationships"). This faculty learning community received training in culturally-responsive assessment, and discussed a variety of ways they could incorporate a more deliberate approach to HAP SLO #4 in their spring 2021 courses. The HAP FLC has discussed interdisciplinary ways to use indigenous voices in the classroom, and other relevant activities in HAP classes are contributing to increasing respect for Indigenous cultures. Student artifacts are being collected after the spring 2021 semester, which will be scored in early fall 2021. A report on the assessment results will be produced shortly thereafter.

The HAP Board offered additional pedagogical support campuswide through a three-part "HAP State of Mind" series of teaching workshops, co-sponsored by the General Education Office and Center for Teaching Excellence. Also, the HAP Systemwide Committee has begun a plan to assess HAP Student Learning Objective #4 on all ten of our campuses. This assessment is an [ongoing process](#) to be completed in the next year.

Diversification Assessment Project

Initially, assessment of diversification (Div) at UHM was not to begin until the Fall of 2020, but this assessment was [moved up in schedule by GEC](#) (prompted by the WASC re-accreditation schedule) and [Diversification Review](#) Projects. Beginning in Spring 2019, the Div Board began constructing SLOs for each area of Diversification. The Div Board submitted several drafts of SLOs to and received feedback from the General Education Committee in Fall 2020. The General Education Committee voted and unanimously approved the Diversification SLOs at its December 17, 2020 meeting. From Spring 2019 to Fall 2020, the Diversification Board constructed Student Learning Objectives for the Diversification areas.

Assessment of Oral Communication Foundation

The GEC discussed the possibility of adding another Oral Communications Focus (or Foundations) course over many GEC meetings. On October 15, 2020, the GEC invited Jaymian Urashima, the O Board chair, to come to the GEC meeting and present her ongoing research into the oral communication skills of UH students. The GEC is expecting to invite Jaymian back to present her findings in Fall 2021. In addition, the Assessment and Curriculum Support Center recently released the results of their 2019 assessment project of students' oral communication

skills (see [summary of results](#)). Together with the Gen Ed External Review Team's report indicating the general inadequacy of "one-off" curricular requirements for scaffolding and reinforcing student learning, these assessment results speak to the need to expand opportunities for students to develop and practice their oral communication skills in coursework across the curriculum.

CURRICULUM

The External Review Team recommended that UHM needed a clear vision of the values, purpose, and goals of general education. The GEC established the Curriculum Working Group (CWG) to respond to these recommendations. One of the first tasks of the CWG was to draft a mission/vision/values (MVV) statement for the general education program. Over the course of AY 2018 and AY 2019, the CWG drafted a statement articulating what graduates of UHM should know, do and value in regard to their general education experience. The MVV statement was drafted by CWG and discussed by the GEC. We then engaged in a period of consultation with chairs, focus instructors, and advisors via a survey. The GEC finalized and approved the [Mission-Vision-Values statement](#) for General Education on [March 13, 2020](#). That statement is now posted on the General Education Office website's [home page](#).

In response to the external reviewers who pointed out discrepancies in how the two-year Hawaiian/Second Language (H/SL) requirement was implemented across the UHM campus, the CWG began evaluating the H/SL policy in Fall 2020. The CWG drafted an extensive report that laid out the history of the policy and ways UHM schools/colleges have modified the requirements, discussed what 202-level competency means in different languages, and proposed multiple possible approaches to revising the policy in the future. The Hawaiian/Second Language report is posted [here](#).

The external review team also noted challenges with getting courses accepted for Gen Ed credit for transfer students, particularly those coming from campuses outside the UH system. The GEC collaborated with the Western Civilization Subcommittee, who negotiated with the GEO, History Department, Council of Academic Advisors, Foundations Board, and Admissions Office in finalizing and rolling out a Western Civilization FG Proration Memorandum of Agreement and Policy Implementation Guide (PIG). The GEC voted to expand this policy to include world civilization courses as well on [October 1, 2020](#). In addition, the GEC approved the passport learning block for the WICHE Interstate Passport, which was officially implemented in spring 2021 with the first batch of 3,550 Passports issued to our undergraduate students. These actions together with a recently revised Executive Policy ([EP 5.209](#)), address some of the identified issues in transfer and articulation. Other transfer and articulation issues, however, cannot be addressed without a systemwide commitment to a curriculum to facilitate student transfers within

and from outside the UH system. This is one of the fundamental parameters of the work of the Summer Institute in 2021.

Another issue the external review team pointed out was that students generally saw their Gen Ed requirements as disconnected from their purposes in attending college, such that Gen Ed appeared as a list of requirements to be checked off. This general level of students' dissatisfaction with and lack of engagement with general education coursework is typical of distribution requirements structures like ours; nationally, hundreds of institutions of higher education have been working to replace distribution requirement models of general education with other curricular models. For UHM, the reviewers suggested a more unified vision in the form of "Clustered Pathways" that would provide more coherence to students' experiences. After extensive discussion and investigation of other institutions' models, the GEC Curriculum Working Group drafted and submitted to the GEC a proposal for Thematic Pathways in General Education (TPGE). The GEC further refined the TPGE initiative and passed it on [May 1, 2020](#). The MFS SEC objected to the TPGEs being implemented without Senate approval, however, on the grounds that it appeared to create new curriculum review and approval committees rather than a means of implementing existing curriculum. GEC leadership discussed the concern with the SEC and revised and simplified the TPGE creation process so that it is fully overseen by the GEC and GEO, instead of by faculty steering committees. The revised TPGE process, described [here](#), was approved by the GEC on April 29, 2021. Representatives from the GEO will meet with STAR staff to ensure that the pathways can be implemented smoothly. The first two thematic pathways will include suites of Gen Ed courses with content focused on Sustainability and on Multilingualism/Multiculturalism, with other pathways to follow in AY 2021-2022.

The above revisions to the existing curriculum were only part of the external review team's recommendations. They also noted a need for large-scale curricular reform that would allow for greater synthesis and coherence across the entire Gen Ed program for all UHM students. With the support of the GEO, the GEC therefore planned to spend the Spring 2021 semester with two Curriculum Working Groups (named "Blue Sky" and "Tinkering") simultaneously brainstorming approaches to two alternative models of Gen Ed curricula (see spring 2021 working group structure and plan, as well as discussion summarized in [January 7, 2021 minutes](#)). Named for the recommendation from the review team, the Blue Sky working group (BSWG) was tasked with completely reenvisioning what general education at UHM could be, with freedom to think outside the box and not feel restricted to existing limitations, graduation requirements, or implementation structures and procedures. These could also include bigger changes to the existing curriculum such as reducing the H/SL requirement to 102-level competency but making it universal, incorporating thematic pathways, addressing Foundational oral communication skills alongside FW, and producing a more scaffolded curriculum with core skills at multiple levels. The Tinkering Working Group (TWG) explored a series of adjustments to our current Gen Ed program: adding an additional oral communication requirement at the

Foundations or lower-division Focus level accompanied by a reduction of Writing Intensive requirements from five to four courses, proposing a suite of options for a universal H/SL requirement, shifting the focus of FG courses from FGA/FGB/FGC to perhaps one FG (focused on global learning) and one FH (focused on Hawaiian/Pacific cultures), incorporating group writing into one or more WI courses, changing DB and DP into two [Div Natural Sciences](#) courses to facilitate transfer, and identifying loosely grouped thematic clusters of Gen Ed courses.

Previous plans for discussions in 2021 were, however, paused by the rapid development of a plan for a [systemwide general education redesign](#) effort in early January 2021. The [2021 Summer General Education Institute](#) will bring 14 faculty (5 of those from UHM) and 3 undergraduate students (1 UHM student, and a second transferring this year to UHM) from across the UH System together to envision a future general education curriculum system-wide. The UH President approved and committed to funding the Summer Institute which is scheduled for July 2021. The GEC has kept its two working groups (BSWG and TWG) and their meeting schedules, but each one pivoted instead to drafting a set of statements focused on competencies recommended by the review and other discussions of the future of Gen Ed nationwide. For each of the following competencies, one of the GEC's working groups researched different models for incorporating those skills into core curricula at UHM and other institutions and discussed articles about those competencies provided by the GEO. These short reports will be provided to the UH General Education Curriculum Design Team to inform their discussions of (1) civic and community engagement, (2) global citizenship and cultural competencies, (3) life skills (e.g. financial literacy, study skills), (4) information and digital literacy, (5) critical thinking and logical reasoning, (6) Native Hawaiian place of learning, and (7) teamwork. This cooperative discussion structure gives UHM's GEC a crucial role in shaping the systemwide curricular reform effort, and fostered greater awareness among the GEC's members about national conversations focused on Gen Ed curricular areas. Both help set up the GEC to play an important role during the systemwide and campus-wide consultations in AY 2021-2022 once the UH General Education Curriculum Design Team produces a proposal for a new general education curricular model this summer.

Governance

The external team made many recommendations on the governance of general education at UHM for both substantial changes in the GEO office and the GEC. For the former, the team hoped that the GEO would be reconfigured as an undergraduate education office that manages the academic experience. The GEO director would be an ex-officio chair of the GEC committee and serve a 5-year term. The director would be selected by a faculty-chaired search committee, who would also conduct annual feedback solicited from faculty and conduct a performance review. The team also underscored the need for the GEO to have a staff-level associate director. This approach would create continuity between directors, and provide a person able to address

the wide range and complex issues of general education at UHM. Furthermore, this associate director could manage staff and GE assessment. This associate director could also be available to all the Boards consolidated into the general education program. These changes to the governance structure were universally rejected by the GEC in its discussions in spring 2019.

However, the GEC convened the Governance Working Group (GWG), which met from spring 2019 through fall 2020, in order to review Gen Ed and Mānoa Faculty Senate documents in an effort to reconcile discrepancies and other ambiguities related to the governance of UHM General Education. The GWG worked on updating the Gen Ed governance document and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to improve consistency and accuracy, and to incorporate the GEO in those documents as the office had been previously excluded from them.

In the Spring 2019, the GEC charged the GWG to compare various documents that were inconsistent in the identification of GEC as a permanent committee of MFS and generally needed updating to include institutional and organizational changes over the past 19 years. In the past two years, the GWG has made significant edits to the faculty governance of the general education document, which outlines the membership and responsibilities of all the GE Boards and GEO. A revised governance document was submitted to the senate in November 2019, and again in 2020, but both years passed without review by the Committee on Administration and Budget. After several rounds of editing, the GEC again presented the SEC with the final version of the governance document in April 2021. It is currently awaiting review again by the Committee on Administration and Budget. The GEC did include longer terms (increased from 3 to 4 years) for its members, added the GEO Director as a voting member, and instituted some changes to the composition of the Gen Ed Boards as part of this revised governance document.

The second recommendation for the GEC by the external review team was the need for a new MOU to provide guidance and clarification of the function and relationships between the Manoa Faculty Senate (via the SEC), the GEC, the General Education Office (GEO), and the higher-level faculty and administration working most closely with General Education at UH Manoa. Work on this memorandum began in 2018, and after many revisions and consultations, the new MOU was signed by all parties on March 23, 2021.

The third recommendation from the external review team was to move from an instructor-based focus system to a course-based one. The GEC made a course-based Focus motion to MFS in spring 2019 (it was tabled pending further consultations), and again on November 20, 2019, but the motion failed in the senate. After this defeat, the GEC made policy revisions to “move the needle” by removing obstacles to applying for course-based Focus designations, encouraging more such designations by combining the instructor- and course-based Focus forms, and adjusting deadlines and review requirements to bring instructor- and course-based Focus proposal processes into alignment. The GEC also voted to end staff-based

focus proposals in the Fall 2021. These staff-based proposals were rarely used by departments who would apply for a focus designation in advance of the hire of a temporary instructor. After this vote, all departments will transition to a course-based focus proposal. On May 6, 2021, the GEC revisited this issue and, given its recognized authority overseeing implementation of the Gen Ed program, voted to end accepting instructor-based Focus proposals in fall 2022, with the exception of special topics and directed reading/research courses. Instructor-based Focus designations approved or renewed before fall 2022 will be grandfathered in, but can only be renewed as course-based designations thereafter (with the exceptions noted above).

Looking Forward

Over these past three years, the GEC has developed its assessment, curriculum, and governance solutions for the general education program at UHM. In collaboration with the GEC and all the Boards, the GEO has developed extensive collections of online [teaching resources](#). We have also offered teaching workshops through the Center on Teaching Excellence, as well as pedagogical support via the two assessment Faculty Learning Communities (for FG and HAP) to further develop faculty engagement and sustain attention to the objectives of general education at UHM. And we have already taken the first steps towards collaborating with colleagues at all ten UH campuses to imagine a new general education program that is transparent to all. More information about the systemwide Gen Ed redesign initiative can be found [here](#), and the Summer Institute [here](#).

In the 2021–22 academic year, the GEC will play a key role in consultations across campus and in support for the new proposed Gen Ed program. The committee will also be heavily involved in helping to shape plans for implementation, with new processes, committees, proposals, etc. necessitated by the new curriculum. We have used our assessment, curriculum, and governance working groups to explore ways to support students' sense of belonging through place-based traditions and learning. We look forward to helping develop ways to increase cohorts and learning communities in a fully-developed first year experience. Responding to the external report, we have aimed to calibrate general education requirement distributions (e.g., universal 102-level H/SL competency), and have begun to rethink current “one-off” requirements as insufficient in areas such as oral communication, ethical reasoning, HAP, and quantitative reasoning. At the very least, we are confident that our focus on assessment, curriculum, and governance have contributed to boldly reimagining general education at UHM. Appendix A summarizes the GEC responses to the review team recommendations.

APPENDIX A

Status of GE Program Review Recommendations

Recommendation	Addressed	Rejected by GEC	In Process
Build a clear vision for your general education program: see Mission-Vision-Values statement	✓		
Develop student learning outcomes: here , here and here	✓		
Develop and implement a program-wide assessment program	✓		
Develop policy statement regarding use of assessment data	✓		
GEC needs to provide stronger leadership (field questions and concerns): <i>Mandate deemed unclear</i>	?		
Certify and approve courses, not instructors: <i>motion failed to pass Manoa Faculty Senate; passed by GEC May 2021</i>	✓		
Change schedule for course renewals from 5 to 10 years to stabilize the curriculum		✓	
Honor UH CC's transfer equivalency decisions from non-UH institutions: <i>included in revised EP 5.209</i>	✓		
Move GEO under reconfigured OUE: <i>integrated into redesigned VP&AE office with direct reporting line to VP</i>	✓		
Confirm GEC as a permanent MFS committee: <i>governance document revised, new MOU submitted to SEC</i>	✓		
Make GEO Director ex-officio chair of GEC serving 5-year term		✓	
GEC should include a representative from each school/college		✓	
GEC members should serve 5-year terms: <i>GEC proposed changing terms from 3 to 4 years in revised governance document submitted to MFS</i>			✓
Establish a staff level Associate Director in GEO		✓	
Consolidate existing boards into a single approval body of GEC members, with 1-2 annual course reductions		✓	
Curriculum redesign: Thematic Pathways developed, H/SL report being finalized, second Oral Communication requirement recommended, assessment of FG, H&P, and Diversification underway, "Blue Sky" and "Tinkering" working groups			✓