

MEMORANDUM

DATE: December 20, 2018

TO: Michael Bruno
Interim Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs
And Vice Chancellor for Research

Brian Powell
Chair, University of Hawai'i Mānoa Faculty Senate Executive Committee

FROM: Shannon L. Johnson
Chair, General Education Committee



SUBJECT: Response to Internal and External Program Reviews

The General Education Committee (GEC), a permanent committee of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (UHM) Faculty Senate, sets the policies and procedures that govern implementation and assessment of General Education (GenEd) requirements. The General Education Office (GEO), housed administratively in the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs (OVCAA), implements those requirements in accordance with the policies and procedures set by the GEC. In January 2017, the GEC unanimously voted to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the current GenEd curriculum, the first since its inception in 2001, and to establish a five-year cycle of program review. This initial comprehensive assessment was designed to be an internal self-study by a steering committee that received tools and guidance from the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). After the internal self-study was underway, the OVCAA initiated an external review. In this memorandum the GEC is responding to the recommendations outlined in both an Internal Review Report and an External Review Report.

Both the internal and external reports recognize the value the general education curriculum brings to UHM but also acknowledge the inevitable need for periodic re-assessment and adjustments in order to meet the evolving needs of our 21st century students, and the local economy and community to which they will contribute after graduation. Both reports include recommendations for changes, some of which can be accommodated more quickly, while others will require more time and collaborative assessment. It is imperative to recognize that any changes to UHM's GenEd curriculum impacts the nine other colleges and universities in the University of Hawai'i system, so considerations should extend beyond our single institution. The GenEd requirements and curriculum are the purview of the Mānoa Faculty Senate. In this memorandum, the GEC is providing feedback to initiate the UHM Faculty Senate's effort to address the findings and recommendations of both reports.

Overall, the GEC agrees with many of the recommendations put forth in both reports and supports the framework used by the steering committee report, which referenced the definition of General Education put forth by the AAC&U in their 2015 "General Education Maps & Markers" or GEMs report. General Education is meant to "provide a platform for fostering proficiencies that span all fields of study (e.g., social and ethical responsibility, critical thinking, evidence-based reasoning, communication, and problem solving) while also providing opportunities for hands-on experience with complex questions and problems." The GEMs report also notes that a quality Gen Ed curriculum "will promote economic competitiveness, democratic vitality, and personal development." Below are the GEC's responses to each recommendation from the External Review Report and the Internal Review Report. In Spring 2019 the GEC will develop a plan of action to move forward, likely forming several working groups to focus on the larger topic areas such as assessment, governance, and curriculum.

General Education External Review Report

The External Review Report's recommendations were divided into three areas: small-scale (S), governance and implementation/administration (G&I/A), and bold reimagining of GenEd at UHM (B).

Small-Scale Recommendations (S):

S1 – Develop student learning outcomes

Response: The GEC strongly agreed that student learning outcomes (SLOs), developed within the context of UH Mānoa's Institutional Learning Objectives, are needed for the GenEd curriculum. The Foundations and individual Focus Boards have already developed SLOs that were approved by the GEC in May 2018 and that are currently being integrated into the proposals for Foundations and Focus courses. As SLOs do not exist for Diversification or Hawaiian/Second Language courses, the GEC recognizes the need to develop SLOs for those GenEd curricular categories. The GEC also discussed whether or not SLOs are needed at the umbrella GenEd level (with views for and against), and this discussion will likely continue in the Spring.

S2 – Develop and implement a program-wide assessment program

Response: The GEC strongly agreed with this recommendation and has committed to the iterative 5-year Program Review process with 1- and 3-year progress reports. We also believe that assessment of the individual GenEd SLOs is needed, which includes collection, analysis, and interpretation of data to see the extent to which students are meeting the SLOs. The GEC plans to form an Assessment committee in Spring 2019 to work with the GEO Director and GEO's Assessment Coordinator to formulate a plan to assess particular SLOs. This committee, the GEO, and Assessment Office will need to work together to provide assessment results by the spring 2020 term for WASC re-accreditation. Adherence to that multi-year plan will be crucial as the committee moves forward in helping to address this area of its charge. As with any good assessment, those results should be used to make improvements.

S3 – The general education committee needs to provide a stronger leadership for the direction, assessment, and information needs for general education (field questions and concerns)

Response: In anticipation of the need to move in this direction, changes were made in 2017-18 to delegate more proposal review decisions to the GenEd Boards, freeing up more time for the GEC to focus on such higher-level issues. Responding to and acting on various recommendations from both reviews will continue to free up more time and be part of a stronger leadership focus. Stronger leadership by the GEC would further be supported by increasing the term of service for GEC members as discussed under G&I/A3 below, as well as providing the GEC Chair with the support in the way of course releases and/or financial compensation commensurate with that provided to members of the Manoa Faculty Senate, Senate Executive Committee.

S4 – Certify and approve courses, not instructors. Focus approvals are currently granted at both the instructor and course levels.

Response: The GEC strongly supports this recommendation to assign Focus designations to courses rather than instructors. The GEC has already started moving in this direction and wants to collect feedback from the Mānoa Faculty Senate and GenEd Boards as an opportunity to listen to comments, questions, and concerns. Numerous benefits exist for students and faculty as well as the GEC, GEO, and GenEd Boards. We recognize that several considerations must be addressed, ranging from new designation criteria, training, possible exceptions, and accountability.

S5 – The schedule for course renewal should be moved from 5 to 10 years to stabilize the curriculum

Response: In light of numerous other recommendations and anticipated changes, including better assessment of GenEd-specific SLOs, the GEC feels strongly that no action be taken at this time and that this recommendation should be reviewed and reconsidered in three years.

S6 – Honor UH community college transfer equivalency decisions from non-UH institutions. Course equivalencies approved by a UH system institution should be honored by UH Mānoa.

Response: The GEC strongly agrees with this recommendation and recognizes it as a significant problem for UH Mānoa students. A key issue, however, is that each campus has its own evaluation process. Current discussions about participating in the WICHE Passport program may also impact this issue. Working out the logistics would be tricky, but the GEC recognizes that such efforts would be best for students and should be pursued. Other UHM offices and programs are discussing this issue, and GenEd should be included in those conversations.

Governance and Implementation/Administration (G&I/A):

G&I/A1 – Integrate GEO into a reconfigured portfolio for the Undergraduate Education Office (OUE)

Response: The GEC agrees with this recommendation to move GEO under OUE. Given that GenEd requirements and OUE focus specifically on undergraduate students, OUE seems like the logical place for GEO. The GEC feels strongly that should such a move occur, stabilized funding of GEO staff positions and its annual operating budget, as requested by the Director of the GEO, must be ensured. Given the timing of the UHM reorganization proposal, on 14 Nov 2018 the GEC presented a motion to the Mānoa Faculty Senate (MFS), which passed, to reintegrate the GEO back into the OUE (or equivalent admin structure in future reorganizations) for the purposes of ensuring the long-term integrated and coordinated administration of general education with the administration of full four-year undergraduate degree programs at UHM. The GEO Director does not concur with this recommendation because she does not feel it would solve any identifiable problem.

G&I/A2 – Confirm GEC as a permanent MFS committee

Response: The GEC strongly agrees with this recommendation. Various documents over the years are not consistent in the identification of GEC as a permanent committee of MFS. The GEC plans to update these documents where possible, and the GEC and MFS Senate Executive Committee (MFS-SEC) believe such language should be included in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) currently being drafted to clarify the roles and responsibilities between parties directly involved in the General Education Program (i.e., GEC, GEO, OVCAA, MFS-SEC).

G&I/A3 – Make the GEO Director the ex-officio chair of GEC serving a 5-year term

Response: The GEC disagreed with this recommendation and voiced support for all efforts to maintain MFS control of the curriculum. The GEC did support a more formal collaborative relationship between the GEO and GEC and therefore recommends that the GEO Director be made a voting member of the GEC.

G&I/A4 – GEC should include a representative from each school/college who would serve 5-year terms

Response: While the GEC disagreed with this recommendation as written, the GEC did agree that expanding representation has merits and that this topic, as well as how to implement it, warrant deeper discussion. Moreover, the GEC is open to the exploration of increasing GEC terms of service to possibly four years, with longer terms likely resulting in less rotation of membership. The fresh perspectives that comes with the rotation of membership is valued by the GEC. Finally, the GEC notes that any increase in voting membership should yield an odd number.

G&I/A5 – Establish a staff level Associate Director for the GEO

Response: The GEC felt that this recommendation in the External Report was part of a set of recommendations that involve adding greater responsibility to the GEO Director (e.g., chairing the GEC). Given the GEC's response to some of the set of recommendations as well as other recommendations, the GEC dissented from this recommendation but remained open to further discussion should the functions and workload of the GEO increase.

G&I/A6 – Consolidate existing course Boards into a single approval body consisting of GEC members, with 1-2 annual course reduction for GEC members

Response: The GEC agreed to postpone any judgment on this recommendation until the impact can be seen of the other changes being recommended. This recommendation also contradicts the External Review Team's earlier recommendation that GEC needs to provide stronger leadership for the direction, assessment, and information needs for general education by suggesting they focus on the details of proposal review and approval.

Bold reimagining of general education at UHM (B):

B1 – Revisioning General Education at UHM

Response: The GEC agrees with the External Report's notion that any the revisions of GenEd should support the recognition that GenEd, major, and other graduation requirements are part of a holistic degree program. The GEC sees the value of employing research-based practices and incorporating place-based experiences unique to Hawai'i to ensure UHM graduates are well-rounded and well-educated citizens. As part of the GEC taking on a stronger leadership role on campus, the GEC should communicate across campus how GenEd requirements work together and build upon one another to ensure a clear message as to what all Mānoa graduates should know (breadth and depth of knowledge), be able to do (skills), and value.

B2 – General Education as Outcomes

Response: The GEC agrees that GenEd requirements should be outcomes-based, and to that end, SLOs are being developed and incorporated into the proposal submission and renewal processes. The GEC further recommends that these SLOs should need to connect with larger Institutional Learning Outcomes (ILOs), and that assessment of student learning needs to be naturally integrated into the curriculum design.

Assessment data are also needed to better understand how well competencies are achieved in order for our students to be successful 21st century graduates. The GEC acknowledges the need to clarify GenEd requirements and how they integrate with and complement one another as well as all majors, and we see it as our duty to explore this with purpose, intention, urgency, and the use of assessment.

B3 – Prototype Curriculum Redesign for Cohesive Learning

Response: The GEC appreciated the External Review Team's prototype of a sample model to help us "think outside the box" in redesigning the GenEd curriculum. The GEC was intrigued by the idea of using thematic pathways to provide theme-based knowledge across disciplines to meet the knowledge breadth and cross-cutting skills components of GenEd, which could also complement a student's field of study.

General Education Internal Review Report

The Internal Review Report's recommendations were divided into three areas: curriculum (C), governance (G), and operations (O). This report goes into much greater detail with its recommendations and is supported by numerous resources and data, including responses from surveys conducted with faculty and students.

Curriculum (C):

C1 – Greater coherence is needed within the GenEd curriculum

Response: As previously stated, the GEC agrees that greater coherence and alignment of GenEd with other curricular and institutional goals is needed. The GEC supports reinforcing UHM as a Hawaiian place of learning, and the GenEd curriculum is the ideal way to ensure every Mānoa graduate gains this knowledge.

C2 – Assessment data/results are not being effectively used to improve GenEd programming and teaching practices

Response: The GEC strongly agrees that improvements are needed to address this point. As described above, SLOs were developed and approved last year for much of the GenEd curriculum, and improved assessment results can be integrated into the iterative 5-year program review process. The GEC will support efforts to move forward with better assessment by addressing what additional data should be collected and that such data should be used to make curriculum improvements. The limited assessment data currently available indicate that students are learning from the Gen Ed curriculum and that students perceive that they are learning.

C3 – Large numbers of students who transfer to UHM find it difficult to fulfill some of the GenEd requirements in a timely fashion

Response: The GEC strongly agrees with this recommendation and recognizes it as a significant problem for UH Mānoa students.

Governance (G):

G1 – There is a lack of clarity in the roles and responsibilities between parties directly involved in GenEd

Response: The GEC responded to a request by the MFS-SEC to provide comment on a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The GEC will respond to any more requests for input to this effort. The GEC recognizes the need to update governance documents that will also provide clarity.

G2 – The rotating model of leadership used within the GEC does not create a structure that can successfully support sustainable progress

Response: The GEC generally disagreed with this recommendation, noting that rotating membership promotes inclusion of ideas and greater access to campus faculty. That said, the GEC did discuss steps to improve sustainable progress such as increasing terms of service and expanding membership eligibility.

Operations (O):

O1 – There is a need for increased operational efficiency, particularly in the course designation process

Response: The GEC strongly agrees with this recommendation and, as previously mentioned, is already taking steps to assign Focus designations to courses rather than instructors. The GEO has also been working on improving operational efficiency through the development of an online proposal process, new records management processes, and new data tracking systems.

O2 – The GEO serves a vital function in providing stability for GenEd; however, clear processes are not currently in place to foster the development and preservation of institutional memory

Response: The GEC agrees with many aspects of this recommendation and points to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) currently being drafted as a step towards this goal. Other considerations mentioned above include extending the term of service for GEC members (G&I/A4) and making the GEO Director a voting member of the GEC (G&I/A3).