

ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16

Chancellor's General Education Advisory Committee

The Chancellor's General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC) met five times at the CSU System Headquarters (September, November, January, March, and May) during the 2015-16 academic year. This year's committee consisted of the following members:

Bill Eadie (Chair)	Journalism & Media Studies	San Diego
Mary Ann Creadon (Vice Chair)	Literary Studies	Humboldt
Susan Gubernat	English	East Bay
David Hood	History	Long Beach
Barry Pasternack	Business	Fullerton
Mark Van Selst	Psychology	San José
Sean Walker	Biology	Fullerton
Mark Wheeler	Philosophy	San Diego
Catherine Nelson	Political Science	Sonoma
John Stankas	Chemistry	San Bernardino Valley College
Elizabeth Adams	CSU Northridge	
Terri Eden	San José State University	
Joseph Bielanski	Berkeley City College	
Jason Colombini	Cal Poly San Luis Obispo	
Stacy Acosta	CSU East Bay	
Jeff Spano	Dean, Institutional Effectiveness, CCC	
Pam Walker	Vice Chancellor, Academic Affairs, CCC	
Christine Mallon	Assistant Vice Chancellor, Academic Programs and Faculty Development	
Ken O'Donnell	Senior Director, Student Engagement and Academic Initiatives & Partnerships	

Regular guests included Denise Fleming, Chair, CSU Academic Senate Committee on Academic Preparation and Education Programs; Debra David, Coordinator of Liberal Learning Partnerships; Emily Magruder, Director of the CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning; Steven Filling, Chair, CSU Academic Senate; and Christine Miller, Vice Chair, CSU Academic Senate. Members and guests participated in person and via video link.

Recommendations

Quantitative Reasoning. GEAC has been sponsoring a pilot program to assess the efficacy of a statistics-based pathway for satisfying CSU General Education Area B-4, Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning, for Community College transfer. The pilot program was based on Statway, a set of statistics courses developed by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. A small number of community colleges experimented with Statway and were given a waiver of the requirement in Executive Order 1100 that reads, "Courses in

subarea B4 shall have an explicit intermediate algebra prerequisite, and students shall develop skills and understanding beyond the level of intermediate algebra.”

GEAC received a report summarizing data that had been generated and analyzed from the pilot. The data report indicated that the Statway pilot courses succeeded in moving a significantly larger number of community college students through a lower division statistics course with one semester of math development, as compared to three or four semesters required of some community college students to meet the CSU’s prerequisite of intermediate algebra. In addition to data from the pilot courses, a study of one CSU campus with a very small sample was presented indicating that students transferring with credit for the statistics course did acceptable work in upper division statistics courses required for their majors.

These data were examined by a committee consisting of former GEAC members John Tarjan (Bakersfield), Kathy Kaiser (Chico), and current GEAC members Catherine Nelson (Sonoma) and Mark Van Selst (San José). The committee’s reaction was mixed: while it applauded the prospect of moving students through the Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning bottleneck, there was concern that the data assessing success in the CSU were wholly inadequate to draw definitive conclusions.

In addition, GEAC became aware of a statistics-based pathway that had been developed for the California Community Colleges by members of the California Acceleration Project. This pathway used different approaches, as compared to Statway, to achieve a similar result.

Following extensive discussion, GEAC recommended continuation of the pilot program for another three years. The committee recommended further that the pilot should be expanded to include statistics pathway courses that used the principles of the model developed by the California Acceleration Projection. Finally, GEAC recommended that the CSU convene a task force to assess the standards for courses fulfilling subarea B4 of CSU General Education.

This last recommendation was forwarded to the CSU Academic Senate’s Academic Affairs Committee. That group, along with the Academic Preparation and Education Programs Committee, developed a resolution calling for the task force that was presented to and adopted by the CSU Senate membership. The task force was established, and GEAC members Eadie, Van Selst, Wheeler, Nelson, Stanskas, and O’Donnell served on it. The task force was still working at the time this report was written. GEAC was regularly updated about the work of the task force, once it had been formed.

Oral Communication. GEAC had long ago recommended that community college courses counting for transfer as CSU General Education Area A-1 include a face-to-face instructional component. Given that at least one CSU institution had developed a fully online oral communication course that was being offered for transfer within the CSU, there was some opinion that the technology of online instruction could have progressed to the point where face-to-face interaction with audiences could be successfully carried out in a fully online environment.

GEAC authorized a pilot student of fully online oral communication courses, and community colleges participating in the pilot were allowed to use these courses for transfer to the CSU. Instructors from these courses met online once a year to report on their progress and to compare notes about best practices with each other. An oversight group consisting of current GEAC chair Eadie, former GEAC member Kevin Baaske (Los Angeles), and community college faculty member Anthony Ongyod (Mira Costa College) monitored the project.

Following the February 2016 instructor meeting, the oversight committee decided that the pilot project might have advanced enough that standards for approving fully online oral communication courses for transfer might be ready for development. GEAC heard reports to this effect at both its March and May meetings. Following discussion at both meetings, GEAC members approved the oversight group to develop a detailed proposal for presentation to the 2016-17 GEAC committee for deliberation.

Reports

GEAC regularly monitored the work of Debra David on liberal learning partnerships, in particular the “Give Students a Compass” program and a Faculty Collaboratives project that was sponsored by the American Association of Colleges and Universities. It also received regular reports from on the Work of the CSU Institute for Teaching and Learning from Emily Magruder, the center’s director.

Community College representatives on the committee provided regular updates on the progress of implementing the pilot baccalaureate degrees that had been authorized by legislation.

Committee member Mark Van Selst updated GEAC on the status of the WICHE Passport Project. By resolution of the CSU Academic Senate, the CSU sent representatives to observe the process of creating a model general education transfer curriculum for interstate transfer, but stipulated that the CSU would not become a party to the project once it was complete.

Chancellor’s Office liaison Ken O’Donnell provided GEAC with regular updates on the annual review of community college courses proposed for CSU transfer. In this cycle, approximately 2000 submissions were reviewed by a team of over 40 campus articulation officers. Ken reported that several statistics pathway sequences satisfying quantitative reasoning were added to the Statway pilot. He also reported that two areas continued to cause difficulty for reviewers: (1) how much music performance could be included in general education music theory courses; and (2) what should be the content of courses proposed to satisfy Area A3: Critical Thinking.

Issues

GEAC discussed the following issues during the 2015-16 Academic Year. While GEAC is not a policy committee, it may recommend revisions designed to clarify the meaning of provisions in Executive Order 1100, which governs CSU General Education. GEAC also recommends policy to the CSU Academic Senate, generally via the senate’s Academic Affairs (AA) Committee. Chair Eadie served as an ex-officio member AA, and AA Chair Catherine Nelson served as an ex-officio member of GEAC.

Upper Division General Education. GEAC member Mark Van Selst has been especially concerned about how transfers of upper division general education courses are handled, especially in an era of online courses that are offered by one CSU university with the expectation that the course will count for upper division general education credit at any other CSU university. Currently, each university evaluates each transferred course against its own courses; if there is a question, the appropriate department chair is consulted. GEAC members recognized the problems that might arise from an extensive selection of online courses aimed at filling upper division general education requirements, but for now committee members were satisfied with using the present system.

GEAC has also been aware that community colleges with pilot baccalaureate degrees will soon begin offering upper division general education courses in conjunction with those degrees. There may be students who enroll in a Community College bachelor's program but then decide to transfer to the CSU. In doing so, there will likely be issues regarding transfer of courses that may count for upper division general education. GEAC members recognized that this problem may exist, but insufficient information is yet available to guide an intelligent discussion. For now, the CSU may well treat these upper division courses on a case-by-case basis, as is current policy. GEAC will continue to monitor for problems that may arise.

Courses Qualifying for Humanities General Education Credit. Some community college campuses proposed philosophical logic courses for humanities credit. Others proposed first-year courses in American Sign Language for the same section. GEAC members discussed these proposals and concluded that the content may qualify if the syllabus showed sufficient evidence of humanities content in addition to the skill acquisition that these courses may entail. Ken O'Donnell agreed to warn submitters that it might be possible to qualify these courses for humanities credit, but that such a case would be scrutinized closely upon review.

Grade of C- in the "Golden Four." GEAC had supported a minimum of C grade in each general education course in what is known as the "Golden Four" requirements (oral communication, written communication, quantitative reasoning, and critical thinking). On advice of the CSU general counsel, the Chancellor's Office had issued a Coded Memorandum ordering grades of C- in the Golden Four to be counted as C grades. During discussion of this order, GEAC member John Stankas noted that community college faculty do not have the option of giving a C- grade in such courses. GEAC member Terri Eden noted that the C- issue might apply to a small number of students who transfer from out of state, but the number of these cases would not be large. As the order applied most directly to CSU campuses, as opposed to transfer courses, GEAC chose to pass the concern to the Academic Affairs committee of the CSU Academic Senate.

Agenda for 2016-17

GEAC may be expected to take up the following items in the upcoming academic year.

Online Oral Communication for Transfer. GEAC is likely to deliberate on and make recommendations after considering the report from the Online Communication oversight group.

Revisions to Executive Order 1100. GEAC member Susan Gubernat reported that as her campus worked on the transition from quarters to semesters the campus revised its general education requirements. In doing so, the campus committee noticed that there were a number of places where the language of this executive order might be improved. GEAC may establish a working group to review the executive order and recommend revisions for clarity to the full committee.

Guiding Notes for Quantitative Reasoning Transfer Courses. GEAC will likely need to recommend and/or review revisions to the Guiding Notes based on actions taken by the CSU Academic Senate and/or the CSU Board of Trustees as a result of the recommendations made by the Quantitative Reasoning Task Force.

Campus Uniqueness of Implementation of General Education. GEAC may wish to survey individual CSU universities to determine what each campus considers to be unique elements of how general education is implemented on that campus. The results of such a survey could assist campuses in their continual efforts to improve the general education experience for their students.

Academic Minors Based in General Education. A model curriculum for one such minor, in sustainability, has been developed. GEAC may wish to consider whether the development of other such minors would be advisable, and if so what would be the implications for transfer of coursework that counts both in general education and in the minor.

Community College Pilot Baccalaureate Degrees. As these degrees start to be offered, GEAC may wish to monitor the program requirements in upper division general education so as to be ahead of transfer issues that may result.