

Minutes of the General Education Committee

Wednesday, October 3, 2012

Hawai'i Hall 208

ATTENDEES: Ron Cambra (AVCUE), Joy Logan, Dore Minatodani, Sarita Rai, Amy Schiffner, Carolyn Stephenson (SEC), Wei Zhang

GEO SUPPORT STAFF: Dawne Bost, Lisa Fujikawa, Jo-Anne Nakamoto, Todd Sammons

EXCUSED: Scott Rowland, Comfort Sumida, Ryan Yamaguchi

GUESTS: Reed Dasenbrock (VCAA), Matt Romaniello (F Board)

CALL TO ORDER:

The meeting was called to order by Chair Dore Minatodani at 12:01 p.m.

MINUTES of the 9/19/12 meeting were unanimously approved without comment.

FOUNDATIONS-SYMBOLIC REASONING (FS) REQUIREMENT UPDATE

Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs Reed Dasenbrock addressed the GEC concerning the FS requirement. He began his talk by stating that General Education is considered “a structure” by faculty and administration while students consider it “something to navigate.” He stated that although most of Gen Ed makes sense to students, the FS requirement is something “they don’t understand.” The Arts and Sciences requirement that all students must complete the FS requirement at UHM illustrates the “tension between the community colleges and Manoa” and the difficulties many transfer students encounter with this part of Gen Ed. Additionally, the expected WASC change to include a quantitative reasoning proficiency may impact Manoa negatively if the FS requirement is not changed to meet WASC’s new requirements.

Dasenbrock stated that he is making an “inference” that the symbolic reasoning-dominated FS requirement will not match the WASC quantitative reasoning competency, thus threatening Manoa’s accreditation. Loss of accreditation will mean loss of federal financial assistance including student financial aid. He stated that “we cannot have Gen Ed at odds with WASC”, thus “we are undoubtedly going to have to change” the FS requirement. Dasenbrock responded to a question about the extent of change needed by stating that “certainly MATH 100 and PHIL 110 would have to be tweaked.”

Dasenbrock also provided a brief history of the development of the FS requirement and the relationship between Manoa and the community colleges which are part of the Foundations multi-campus articulation agreement. He pointed out that Manoa and the community colleges are under different accreditation standards, so this issue may be one that further stresses the relationship between Manoa and the community colleges.

In response to a question about the relationship between the anticipated quantitative reasoning proficiency and the DQP initiative, Dasenbrock stated that the two are “not unrelated.” He felt that this plan asks “what are you getting from your college degree” and attempts to make seemingly unrelated college experiences “coherent.”

The next topic addressed by Dasenbrock was information literacy, which he contended is “going in the direction of each major having information literacy” that is specific to that major. He stated that quantitative reasoning will not be addressed by every major; it must be managed “at the core level.”

When asked his degree of “attachment to FS,” Dasenbrock responded that the requirement as currently executed is “incoherent” and that he is not sure what the FS emphasis on symbolic reasoning “does for students in the 21st century.” Dasenbrock stated that there could be “a coherent set of courses built around a quantitative reasoning requirement” that would be relevant to 21st century students.

Dasenbrock then addressed questions about SOCS 150 and the course’s FS designation. He stated that the course has practical applications and is one that “people want to take.” He further stated that in his opinion SOCS 150 is a “fabulous course”, but it doesn’t meet the FS Hallmarks. He stated that this fact indicates a problem with the Hallmarks, not the innovative nature of the course. Todd Sammons suggested that SOCS 150 is more of a critical thinking than symbolic or quantitative reasoning course, so perhaps there is no place for it in the core at this time. Dasenbrock stated that critical thinking is part of WASC but it is “discipline specific” and thus will not be managed at the core level.

When informed that the other issue assigned to the GEC is information literacy, Dasenbrock suggested that Monica Stitt-Bergh could provide information about the topic that indicates UHM is “doing fine” with this WASC proficiency. Because of this determination, he recommended that the GEC focus on the FS issue since this is where it is “crystal clear” that there is “tension” between the proposed new WASC competencies and Manoa’s Gen Ed.

Dasenbrock next shared that approximately 50% of Honolulu Community College students fulfill their FS requirement with PHIL 110 and that the HonCC faculty have been the most “vocal” about maintaining the current FS Hallmarks. Stephenson remarked there is an articulation problem related to FS, and Dasenbrock responded the problem rests with the “incoherence” of the Arts and Sciences requirements, not Gen Ed.

Romaniello mentioned that Maui College has an additional requirement that meets the need for quantitative instruction. After a brief discussion of the possibility of establishing a Quantitative (FQ) requirement at Manoa, Dasenbrock stated that there will be no additional Gen Ed requirement (such as an FQ) while he is serving as VCAA. Dasenbrock then concluded his discussion of the FS issue and both he and Romaniello departed from the meeting.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Minatodani introduced new GEC Board member Amy Schiffner. She also announced that Vice-Chair Julie Iezzi had resigned from the GEC and that Jo-Anne Nakamoto would no longer be serving as support staff for the GEC.

COURSE-BASED PROPOSALS

Course-based E Focus for ECON 358 was recommended for approval by the E Board, who noted that the ethical issues were imbedded in the subject matter. Minatodani agreed, but stated the proposal would have benefited from better descriptions of assignments. Logan and Rai both responded by stating additional information addressing assignments was not part of the proposal requirements, so more information could not be expected. The course was unanimously approved for a course-based E designation.

O Focus for COMG 351 was unanimously approved for a course-based designation with a letter that asked for a second syllabus that would go over “course objectives more explicitly.” A subsequent discussion of the definitions and uses of the terms “objectives” and “outcomes” did not result in full agreement about the use of the terms in all instances.

STUDENT REQUEST FOR RESUBMISSION OF FOCUS EXEMPTION APPLICATION

A student made a request to resubmit his Focus exemption application after receiving a letter indicating his initial request was denied by the current GEC. Minatodani shared that the student questioned why his application was denied when last academic year other students in the same study abroad class were granted the Focus exemption. Minatodani reported she told the student that all the students who took the class in question were required to submit individual Focus exemption applications. Since each individual application was reviewed on its own merits, and this latest application was reviewed this year by a different group of GEC committee members, the student was told not to compare his decision to the decisions received by his classmates.

Some new GEC members stated they were not aware of the prior Focus exemption applications and approvals for the same course that was submitted by this student. They indicated they may have voted differently had they been privy to this information. Minatodani stated that the approvals of the other applications should not influence the decisions made about the current application. The committee voted unanimously to allow the student to resubmit his proposal.

DRAFT OF GEC RESPONSE TO INQUIRY ABOUT APPLICATION OF FOCUS EXEMPTIONS

The next item agenda item was Minatodani's proposed response (on behalf of the GEC) to an Arts and Sciences advisor who inquired about the feasibility of assigning upper division Focus credit for a recently awarded W Focus Exemption. The letter essentially stated that it is the School/College which must make the decision of how to apply a Focus exemption. The GEC is responsible for determining if the course (or extraordinary experience) presented in the Focus exemption application meets the Hallmarks required to award the exemption. It is beyond the purview of the GEC to make curricular decisions such as a determination of upper or lower division equivalence. After a brief exchange, the committee voted unanimously to approve the response.

UPDATE ON THE WASC HAWAII PACIFIC REGIONAL CONFERENCE

Sammons provided information about the WASC Hawaii Pacific Regional Conference. He shared that WASC is redesigning the accreditation process to be more “streamlined.” The new process may involve fewer and shorter campus visits and communication via Skype. He stated there will also be targeted reviews of specific areas rather than the broad reviews that have been conducted in the past. He also shared that campus proficiencies in the five pillars (writing, oral communication, critical thinking, information literacy and quantitative skills) will not be “nationally normed.” He stated that Monica Stitt-Bergh believes Manoa is “on track” with our current level of proficiency in the five pillars.

Sammons also reported that the Institutional Learning Objectives (ILO) committee met with WASC's Jill Ferguson for a conversation that had “no real take-aways.” Cambra also agreed that the meeting was more conversational than instructional. Cambra stated that the conversation and conference indicated that WASC is “positive about our academic initiatives.” Sammons also reported that WASC “seems to be pulling away from DQP” based on the talk with Ferguson and other talking points at the Conference.

Sammons reported and the committee confirmed that no GEC or GEO representative attended the third day of the summit that was described as a “faculty forum.”

UPDATE ON THE ALIGNMENT SUMMIT

Sammons, Minatodani, and Fujikawa attended the P20-sponsored Alignment Summit that focused on the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) developed by a national governors association and adopted by 46 states including Hawaii. The standards are the result of consultations with 2- and 4-year post-secondary institutions addressing the freshman proficiency expectations held by the institutions in the areas of English, Math and Literacy. The summit was held to explain the CCSS as a means of better aligning curricula nationwide, and from one institution to the next. Cambra stated that “building a bridge” between high school and college math proficiencies and expectations was critical and may require a separate math-only summit.

A discussion followed about Manoa’s current admissions standards and the increasing number of transfer students attending the university. Cambra reported that “the number of transfers has surpassed the number of incoming freshmen from high schools.” He also stated that enrollment in Manoa’s graduate school programs has dropped while undergraduate enrollment has increased.

LIAISONS AND WORKING GROUP APPOINTMENTS

The last item of business was assignment of liaisons to the Boards, Diversification subcommittee, and special issues groups. The GEO will make sure all liaisons are informed of the Board meeting dates and times and add liaisons to the Board email lists.

Liaisons:

E	Joy Logan
H	Wei Zhang
O	Comfort Sumida
W	Sarita Rai
F	Scott Rowland

Diversification Subcommittee:

Comfort Sumida
Sarita Rai
Scott Rowland
Wei Zhang

Special Issues:

FS	Amy Schiffner
Info Lit	Sarita Rai

The meeting was adjourned at 1:05pm.

GEO Recorder: Dawne Bost