

## CSU Fullerton GE Task Force Response to ASCSU GETF Report (Feb. 2019)

March 13, 2019

In response to EO 1100-Revised (Aug. 23, 2017), the CSU Fullerton Academic Senate formed the CSUF General Education Task Force (CSUF GETF) with the charge of making recommendations for GE curriculum changes that are compliant with EO 1100r and, at the same time, make sense for CSUF. Therefore, since Fall 2017, the CSUF GETF has been engaging in a collaborative and thoughtful process of defining what GE means at CSUF and how to implement GE curriculum development that is responsive to stakeholders (with students first and foremost among them) and to partners situated in various areas and at multiple levels, including the ASCSU GE Task Force (ASCSU GETF). Following this, we wish to recognize the efforts of the ASCSU GETF in producing its final report, as well as to make the following recommendations to the system-wide Academic Senate.

### Recommendations:

- Begin a process of developing a comprehensive response to the ASCSU GETF Report that includes systematic and inclusive campus discussions building upon the existing work of the CSUF GE Task Force Report to develop a vision of GE for our campus.
- Implement campus shared governance processes that respect the role of the faculty at each campus in the development and modification of curriculum as guaranteed by the Higher Education Employer-Employees Act of the State of California (HEERA) and commonly accepted practices endorsed by the American Association of University Professionals (AAUP).
- Call for the establishment of faculty-led GE task forces on each CSU campus that will promote genuine collegial dialogue regarding GE development appropriate for each campus and allow for a state-wide grassroots discussion of articulation across the CSU system.
- Urge the Chancellor's Office (CO) to make no changes and to issue no further deadlines regarding GE until any proposed changes are vetted through the normal process of shared governance and a formal vote by ASCSU. Without a moratorium, the GE reforms contemplated by ASCSU GETF Report will inhibit the goals of the GI 2025, as they will critically delay the goals of student success at the very moment campuses are starting to mobilize energy around retention, graduation and eliminating achievement gaps.
- Immediately release as part of the public record the minutes for the approximately twenty ASCSU GETF meetings held over two years<sup>1</sup> per the commonly

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<sup>1</sup> Colleen Flaherty, Study of American Democracy on Cal State Chopping Block, February 27, 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/02/27/faculty-proposal-would-split-us-history-and-ideals-gen-ed-sequence-across-cal-state>

accepted practice of the ASCSU, which purports to be a “collegial form of governance based on historic academic traditions as recognized by California law.”<sup>2</sup>

- Immediately release all the data used for the purpose of the ASCSU GETF Report. In the absence of data, recommend to the CO the implementation of a systematic process of gathering the most current, reliable, and valid data available on GE within the CSU system and within individual campuses.
- As “faculty are the experts in both disciplinary thinking and the pedagogical practices required for student learning to occur,”<sup>3</sup> sufficiently involve faculty experts in the disciplines directly relevant to any proposed changes to GE programs.

The CSUF GETF offers these recommendations upon consideration of concerns about the process through which the ASCSU GETF Report was developed, specifically, the apparent lack of consultation, transparency, and data-driven determinations involved in the GETF Report process.

#### Lack of Consultation:

The CSUF GETF has serious concerns about the absence of meaningful consultation that preceded the ASCSU GETF Report. In its March 2018 update, the ASCSU GETF stated:

We value your thoughts on any and all parts of this update. For robust general education review and change, all stakeholders need ample time for full dialogue and consultation, with a goal of achieving mutual consensus. Since CSU faculty are the discipline experts, GE change and review should be led by CSU faculty.<sup>4</sup>

In the spirit of shared governance and collaboration, as well as a sense of responsibility to our own campus stakeholders, the CSUF GETF responded to all of the ASCSU GETF updates that were made available to us in March 2018 and in October 2018. In our response to the March update, we asked the ASCSU GETF to define its principles of dialogue and consultation: “We concur that the process of GE revision requires conversation and consultation between all stakeholders. However, what does ‘ample’ mean?” We also provided specific feedback on the value of American Institutions at CSUF: “We believe that CSUF offers several excellent models of how AI courses are not simply repeating knowledge learned in high school, and we would be

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<sup>2</sup> Academic Senate of the California State University website, <https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/faculty-staff/academic-senate>

<sup>3</sup> ASCSU General Education Task Force Update, October 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Initial Update from the ASCSU General Education Task Force, March 12, 2018.

eager to share our expertise with the CSU GE Task Force.”<sup>5</sup> Responding to the October memo, we reiterated our request for a consultative process involving CSUF faculty:

We would expect, especially in the context of the recent history of EO 1100R and EO 1110, that any policy that results in mandated changes to GE would involve full and transparent consultation between all stakeholders. Your work on this document should not be considered a substitute for system-wide consultation, especially with faculty.<sup>6</sup>

Despite stated invitations in both the March 2018 and October 2018 updates by the ASCSU GETF for stakeholders to provide feedback on its work within the context of its expressed belief in the importance of consultation, the ASCSU GETF never responded to the questions and feedback offered by the CSUF GETF. Given that the period for campus consultation on potential revisions to EO 1100 set by the CO was less than three months, from March 10, 2017<sup>7</sup> until the feedback deadline of June 16, 2017,<sup>8</sup> the CSUF GETF fully expected the ASCSU GETF to clarify a process of meaningful consultation on GE restructuring.

The concerns of the CSUF GETF about the failure of the ASCSU GETF to engage in a process of meaningful consultation with campuses are echoed by a resolution of the CSUF Academic Senate, as well as those of other CSU Academic Senates:

[CSUF:] Therefore, be it resolved that the Academic Senate begin a process of developing a comprehensive response to the Report that includes systematic and inclusive campus discussions building upon the existing work of the CSUF campus GE Task Force report to develop a vision of GE for our campus.<sup>9</sup>

[CSU Stanislaus:] [The task force's work is] illegitimate [and an] infringement on both faculty curricular authority and the spirit of shared governance.<sup>10</sup>

[CSU Chico:] Over nearly two years, the GETF did not make a meaningful effort to consult with CSU faculty or students. It did not solicit input from campus senates, and it studiously avoided input from faculty whose programs deliver General Education curricula and whose disciplinary expertise was directly relevant to its work.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> CSUF General Education Task Force, Response to the March 2018 Update from the ASCSU General Education Task Force, April 2018.

<sup>6</sup> CSUF General Education Task Force, Response to GETF Oct. 2018 report, November 2018.

<sup>7</sup> CSU Campus GE Policy Feedback Form, [http://content-calpoly-edu.s3.amazonaws.com/ge/1/documents/EO\\_1100\\_Campus\\_Feedback\\_Form\\_May\\_2017.pdf](http://content-calpoly-edu.s3.amazonaws.com/ge/1/documents/EO_1100_Campus_Feedback_Form_May_2017.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> Executive Vice Chancellor Loren Blanchard, Letter to Academic Senate Chair Christine Miller, March 15, 2017, <http://blogs.csun.edu/facultypresident/2017/09/19/the-chancellors-office-view-on-compliance-with-executive-orders/>

<sup>9</sup> CSUF ASD 19-18, Resolution for Consultation on ASCSU GE Task Force Report, March 7, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> CSU Stanislaus 03/AS/19/SEC, Resolution Rejecting the Report of the GE Task Force, February 26, 2019.

<sup>11</sup> CSU Chico Academic Senate, Resolution to Reject the General Education Taskforce Report (February 2019), March 2019.

### Lack of Transparency:

The work of the ASCSU GETF leading up to the release of its report was marked by a lack of transparency. In its initial update, the ASCSU GETF stated, “The General Education Task Force (GETF) was established in 2017 by ASCSU resolution (<https://www.calstate.edu/acadsen/Records/Resolutions/2016-2017/documents/3271.shtml>). Since Spring 2017, the General Education Task Force has convened nine times.”<sup>12</sup> Further, the ASCSU GETF October 2018 update stated, “Questions and feedback about the content of this update should be directed to the Task Force Co-Chairs.”<sup>13</sup> However, beyond the information provided in the aforementioned updates, the work of the ASCSU GETF has not been shared with the CSUF GETF despite our efforts to send questions and feedback to the ASCSU GETF per its instructions.

The ASCSU GETF conducted its discussions and proceedings behind closed doors. When two of our CSUF faculty colleagues attempted to attend a meeting of the ASCSU GETF on February 1, 2019, they were denied admission. Meeting agendas, minutes, and other correspondence among ASCSU GETF members are not available, despite a public records request demanding their release:

A Public Records Act Request for access to all records pertinent to the deliberations of the General Education Task Force was submitted on January 14, 2019. On February 8, the Chancellor’s Office responded by sending a list of six links to documents available on the CSU webpage, none of which work. The CO’s response claimed that for a variety of reasons it would be unable to produce additional documentation earlier than June 2019.<sup>14</sup>

The perceived lack of transparency of the workings of the ASCSU GETF has been condemned by faculty across the CSU since the report’s release on February 8, including CSU Fullerton, CSU Chico, CSU Stanislaus, CSU East Bay, and CSU Fresno.<sup>15</sup>

### Lack of Data-Driven Determinations:

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<sup>12</sup> Initial Update from the ASCSU General Education Task Force, March 12, 2018.

<sup>13</sup> ASCSU General Education Task Force Update, October 2018.

<sup>14</sup> CSU Chico Academic Senate, Resolution to Reject the General Education Taskforce Report (February 2019), March 2019.

<sup>15</sup> CSU Chico Academic Senate, Resolution to Reject the General Education Taskforce Report (February 2019), March 2019; CSU Stanislaus 03/AS/19/SEC, Resolution Rejecting the Report of the GE Task Force, February 26, 2019; Council on History and American Institutions, The California State University and the Death of History, February 25, 2019.

Despite the ASCSU GETF's stated commitment to make its work "data driven wherever possible rather than assumption based,"<sup>16</sup> its report provides no evidence that current General Education programs do not achieve their objectives.<sup>17</sup> Furthermore, the report provides no data to suggest that General Education courses, including those in history and political science, prevent students from graduating.<sup>18</sup> Also despite the ASCSU GETF's expressed principles that "the review and reform (while collaborating with such stakeholders) *must* be led and implemented by faculty" and that "faculty are the experts in both disciplinary thinking and the pedagogical practices required for student learning to occur,"<sup>19</sup> data based on relevant disciplinary expertise are absent in the report.

Instead, the primary source of data for the report seems to rely on "an analysis in the year 2005 by a CSU public policy graduate student (<https://www.csus.edu/ppa/thesis-project/bank/2005/hoggatt.pdf>)."<sup>20</sup> Not only does the ASCSU GETF not provide in any of its updates or in its final report existing data either from peer-reviewed literature or by CSU institutional research and analytical studies, but it also refers to CSU data from fourteen years ago or more: specifically, 1974-75, 1984-85, 1994-95, and 2004-05. Even more problematic than the lack of current or broadly reviewed data is the ASCSU GETF's mis-statement of the master's thesis: "The analysis also confirmed that several hundred courses were being offered on most CSU campuses from which students were required to choose to complete the GE program, significantly in excess of those offered at other California institutions."<sup>21</sup> In fact, the thesis reports that while the ratio of GE to BA units during 2004-05 was higher in the CSU than in the UC, "The CSU system also has an eligible-to-required GE class ratio *similar to the private schools and lower than the UC's* [emphasis added]."<sup>22</sup> The CSUF GETF conveyed our concerns about the erroneous use, as well as general absence, of data in a memo to the ASCSU GETF:

Executive Order 1100R and EO 1110 were criticized for not being data-driven ([AS-3304-17/FGA/AA/APEP](#)). As we are sure that you would agree, any future recommendations made about the GE package at CSU campuses must be based on thorough, accurate, and recent data. Based on what we could see in the memo, we think that there is room for improvement on the use of data, and we hope that you have plans to do so. Our single greatest concern is that many of the conclusions described in this document appear to be predicated on data collected over ten years ago in a student's Master's thesis that focused on the *thirty year history* of GE in the state. If we are going to make substantive, system-

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<sup>16</sup> Initial Update from the ASCSU General Education Task Force, March 12, 2018.

<sup>17</sup> CSU Chico Academic Senate, Resolution to Reject the General Education Taskforce Report (February 2019), March 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Colleen Flaherty, Study of American Democracy on Cal State Chopping Block, February 27, 2019, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2019/02/27/faculty-proposal-would-split-us-history-and-ideals-gen-ed-sequence-across-cal-state>

<sup>19</sup> ASCSU General Education Task Force Update, October 2018.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Gary Lee Hoggatt, General Education in California—Trends Over the Last Thirty Years, MA thesis, CSU Sacramento, 2005, p. 30.

wide changes to GE it would only seem appropriate to work from the most current, reliable, and valid data available. If this thesis represents the current state of knowledge, then perhaps steps should be taken to obtain updated information. Furthermore, the conclusions stated in your update report misrepresent the *System Comparison* data provided in the appendix of the thesis. While we concur that the number of GE courses included in the catalogs across the various CSU campuses may be large, it is critical to remember that not all of these courses are offered in any given semester. Even so, the *System Comparison* data from the thesis provides evidence that the Eligible/Required ratio for the CSU (2004/2005) is 23.7% while the value for the same period at the UC is 46.1%.<sup>23</sup>

However, the CSUF GETF received no response from the ASCSU GETF to the data issues expressed in the memo.

At the time of writing this response, the ASCSU GETF Report has been condemned or outright rejected by several academic organizations and senates, such as the CSU Fullerton Academic Senate, CSU Stanislaus Academic Senate, CSU Chico Academic Senate, members of the CSU Council on History and American Institutions, and the American Historical Association.<sup>24</sup> The CSUF GETF shares many of the concerns expressed in the statements and resolutions of our fellow academic stakeholders. As the CSUF Academic Senate-appointed task force charged with making recommendations on CSUF GE policy, we support the resolution recently passed by our campus Academic Senate.<sup>25</sup>

The CSUF GETF has been committed to carrying out the charge with which it was tasked by our Academic Senate since October 2017, that is, to “highlight GE as the Fullerton stamp on the degrees of all who walk across the stage.”<sup>26</sup> We trust that the ASCSU is also committed to assisting CSU with envisioning and implementing a GE program that is right for each campus. Therefore, we respectfully expect to receive your response to the recommendations made herein, as you can be assured the work of the CSUF GETF will continue.

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<sup>23</sup> CSUF General Education Task Force, Response to GETF Oct. 2018 report, November 2018.

<sup>24</sup> CSUF ASD 19-18, Resolution for Consultation on ASCSU GE Task Force Report, March 7, 2019; CSU Stanislaus 03/AS/19/SEC, Resolution Rejecting the Report of the GE Task Force, February 26, 2019; CSU Chico Academic Senate, Resolution to Reject the General Education Taskforce Report (February 2019), March 2019; Council on History and American Institutions, The California State University and the Death of History, February 25, 2019; AHA President John McNeill and AHA Executive Director Jim Grossman, Letter to AHA members, February 28, 2019, <https://mailchi.mp/historians/action-needed-to-maintain-history-curriculum-at-california-state-university?e=51bcc0b423>; American Historical Association, Letter to AHA members, March 4, 2019, <https://mailchi.mp/historians/action-needed-to-maintain-history-curriculum-at-california-state-university-574755?e=51bcc0b423>.

<sup>25</sup> CSUF ASD 19-18, Resolution for Consultation on ASCSU GE Task Force Report, March 7, 2019.

<sup>26</sup> Academic Senate of the California State University, Fullerton, website, [http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/members/ge\\_task\\_force/](http://www.fullerton.edu/senate/members/ge_task_force/)