

Memo To: Dr. Lori Gonzalez, Provost

Cc: Members of the General Education Advisory Group

Dr. Paulette Marty, Director of General Education

Dr. Anthony Calamai, Dean, College of Arts and Sciences

Dr. Andrew Koch, Chair, Faculty Senate

Dr. Janice Pope, Acting Chair, Council of Chairs

From:

Alan J. Hauser *AJH*
Shawn Arthur *SA*
Rodney Duke *RKD*
Tom Ellis *TBE*
Sandie Gravett *SG*
Kim Hall *K.H.*
Jack Kwong *JK*
Ozzie Ostwalt *OAO*
Raymond Ruble *RR*
Richard Spencer *RS*
Jesse Taylor *JT*

Re: Response to the General Education Advisory Group Report

Date: October 4, 2012

We express concern over certain components of the General Education Advisory Group Report:

1. The report recommends that General Education drop the "Perspectives" because of redundancy, and it recommends retaining "Themes." Since one of the foundational pillars of the General Education program is empirical assessment, we would like to see the assessment results that demonstrate the "Themes" are in fact achieving their pedagogical goals before continuing to support the "Theme" structure as well. If assessment data about the theme structure has been compiled, we should be able to demonstrate the effectiveness of the "themes" in the General Education curriculum. If we cannot demonstrate this, we should not be restructuring based on that same "theme" model.

2. We do not support the suggestion that gateway and capstone courses be allowed in themes for two reasons: first, such a move hinders the integrated learning ideal by creating a hierarchy among the disciplines represented by the courses in a "Theme;" and second, instead of increasing curricular flexibility for the students, adding gateway and capstone courses adds a new element of rigidity to curricular choices. First, the inclusion of gateway and capstone courses undermines the basic philosophy of the General Education curriculum that is based on integrative learning. Gateway and capstone courses could dominate themes, providing as much as 2/3 of the hours in a specific theme and thus become a proxy for any particular discipline that offers the gateway and capstone. Disciplines could assert "ownership" over particular themes by providing the required gateway or capstone components, and the integrative goals would be undermined. The possibility of one discipline defining a theme is contrary to General Education's own idea of integration and interdisciplinarity. Second, gateway and capstone courses will provide additional registration problems for students. Students will be forced to take courses in a particular order and will face greater obstacles in completing themes in a timely fashion.

3. We are concerned that the process for moving to the new model is proceeding too quickly to allow for thorough vetting and faculty input. Also, the process is opaque when greater transparency is needed. For example, it is not clear how themes and designators will be assigned or approved or how much authority WAC committees will have over disciplinary offerings. Furthermore, it is not clear how or who will decide to remove courses from themes as existing themes are reevaluated and repropoed. The current report leaves too many of the details to be determined and lacks specifics on details it offers.

4. We support the idea of maintaining First-Year Seminar but suggest a new model of moving these seminars to disciplinary units. The responsibility of offering First-Year Seminar sections should lie within disciplinary units, and the resources that support First-Year Seminars should be redirected to those units offering them. Such a model returns curriculum matters to the faculty and the academic units where curriculum control rightly resides. A limited number of First-Year Seminar sections based on the current model might be retained for students who are identified as at-risk academically.