

## CSUN Task Force on General Education Report and Recommendations

Ad Hoc Committee convened by President Dianne Harrison  
Co-chaired by Kathryn Sorrells and Brian Burkhart

### Introduction

Between late August and late September 2017, CSUN faculty were informed by CSUN administrators about Executive Orders (EO 1100R and EO 1110) mandated by the CSU Chancellor's Office. Faculty opposed the EOs for an array of reasons including:

- The mandated EOs violated and undermined faculty roles in shared governance
- Faculty, who should play a central role in the educational function of the university, were not consulted
- EO 1100 would have removed GE Section F Comparative Cultural Studies as a stand-alone requirement at CSUN
- Section F Comparative Cultural Studies GE requirement at CSUN:
  - Represents and engages the historical and on-going struggle to include knowledges, experiences, and perspectives from traditionally marginalized communities and academic areas such as Ethnic Studies, Gender and Women's Studies, and Queer Studies that reflect the lived experience of our students
  - Challenges and presents alternative perspectives to the euro-centric canon
  - Incorporates interdisciplinary scholarship and multi-methodological approaches to knowledge and knowledge construction (e.g. across the Humanities and Social Science)
  - Provides a sense of belonging and holistic support for the majority of our students and is critical for the education of ALL students at CSUN
- Removal of development math as mandated by EO 1110
- Lack of data to support changes mandated by EOs
- The untenable timeline set by the Chancellor's Office for the implementation of the EOs

In late September 2017, Faculty Senate voted to not participate in the implementation of EO 1100R and EO 1110; yet, a motion was introduced to suspend the vote for one month. In the interim, from late September to late October 2017, students became aware of the impending changes. Through a month of self-education and collaboration with faculty and staff, students organized a *Week of Action* to raise awareness about the impact on students' education and to protest the mandated EOs. On October 26, 2017, at the Faculty Senate meeting, President Harrison announced that the Chancellor had agreed to allow CSUN to maintain the stand-alone Section F Comparative Cultural Studies GE requirement for First Time Freshman (FTF). While this was an important allowance, faculty and students objected to other mandated changes in Executive

Orders 1100R and 1110. Faculty Senate voted on October 26, 2017 to not reconsider the vote taken on September 28, 2017. Thus, the Faculty Senate vote to not participate in the implementation of EO 1100R and EO 1110 stands in perpetuity.

In November 2017, President Harrison invited members of the CSUN community to serve on an ad hoc Task Force on General Education and asked Brian Burkhart and Kathryn Sorrells to co-chair the Task Force. The co-chairs and President Harrison agreed on the task force statement outlining the purpose, members, process, and timeline for the task force. The purpose of the Task Force on GE was based on an agreement made by President Harrison with Chancellor White to make recommendations concerning our GE program that maintain our cross-cultural competency requirements (Section F of current GE Plan) and align with the California Education Code. The statement below was distributed to the campus in early February 2018.

### **Task Force Statement**

**Purpose:** Recognizing our students' needs, challenges and goals, the Task Force will make recommendations concerning our GE program that advance student success through quality education while maintaining our cross-cultural competency requirements (Section F of current GE Plan) and aligning with the California Education Code.

**Task Force Members:** Initially, members were identified and invited by President Harrison. Additional members were identified and invited by the co-chairs in consultation with faculty, staff and students. The goal is to provide balanced representation across stakeholders on campus.

**Process and Procedures:** The Task Force will engage in transparent, consultative and inclusive processes to develop recommendations. The Task Force honors and respects the Faculty Senate vote to not implement EO 1100 - Revised and EO 1110. Thus, the Task Force is not intended to bypass or sidestep the Faculty Senate vote. The intention of the Task Force is to work creatively and collaborative to find solutions concerning our GE program that address our students' academic success.

Recommendations from the Task Force will be shared with the CSUN campus community, Faculty Senate, and CSUN administrators.

**Timeline:** The Task Force intends to make recommendations by the end of spring semester 2018.

Co-signers,

Dianne Harrison, President, CSUN

Brian Burkhart, Director and Associate Professor, American Indian Studies, CSUN

Kathryn Sorrells, Chair and Professor, Department of Communication Studies, CSUN

**Task Force on General Education Members:**

1. Frankie Augustin, Environmental & Occupational Health
2. Brian Burkhart, American Indian Studies
3. Sandra Chong, Elementary Education
4. Nazaret Dermendjian, Civil Engineering & Construction Management
5. Susan Fitzpatrick-Behrens, History
6. Jimmy Ghandi, Manufacturing Systems Engineering & Management
7. Jonathan Goldenberg, Associated Students President
8. Dave Gray, Biology, Special Assistant to the Dean
9. Barbara Gross, Marketing
10. Gabriel Gutierrez, Chicana/o Studies
11. Brittney Harvey, Student
12. Zahraa Khuraibet, Associated Studies, Vice President
13. Nakaya Manning, Advisor
14. Gina Masequesmay, Asian American Studies
15. Christina Mayberry, University Library
16. Luiz Mendes, University Library
17. Elizabeth Reigos, Advisor
18. Rosa Rivera Furumoto, Chicana/o Studies
19. Lou Rubino, Health Sciences
20. Stevie Ruiz, Chicana/o Studies
21. Jerry Schutte, Sociology
22. Kathryn Sorrells, Communication Studies
23. Jon Stahl, Cinema & Television Arts
24. Mary Pat Stein, Biology
25. Katherine Stevenson, Mathematics
26. Belinda Stillwell, Kinesiology
27. Jerry Stinner, Dean, College of Science & Mathematics
28. Stella Theodoulou, Vice Provost
29. Nate Thomas, Cinema & Television Arts
30. Kaya Tillery, Student
31. Janet Valenzuela, Student
32. William Watkins, VP for Student Affairs & Dean of Students
33. Theresa White, African Studies

## Task Force Recommendations

The Task Force engaged in transparent, consultative and inclusive processes to develop the following recommendations. While Task Force members were initially invited to participate, any member of the CSUN community (faculty, staff, students, and administrators) who wanted to join the Task Force were invited to do so. The co-chairs reported Task Force progress and issues of concern regularly at Faculty Senate Executive Committee meetings and at Faculty Senate meetings. Task Force meeting agendas, meeting minutes/notes, and additional material were posted on the [Faculty Senate website](#) following each meeting (right side links).

In addition to reaching consensus on recommendations, a central goal of the Task Force was to re-affirm the role of faculty in shared governance, and to re-set processes and practices of engagement and decision-making at CSUN.

### *General Recommendations to Improve GE:*

1. General Education at CSUN should maintain an emphasis on **breadth while maximizing flexibility** for students to make choices. To accomplish this, the Task Force recommends maintain breadth requirements for Lower Division GE requirements and flexibility (no area specific requirements) for Upper Division GE.
2. An emphasis on **comparative cultural studies and cultural competency** is integral to the curriculum, ethos, and culture of CSUN as well as to participating in a multicultural, global world; thus, the Task Force recommends maintaining and enhancing, wherever possible, the focus in these areas.
3. In the age of information, media saturation, and technology, the Task Force recommends strengthening the **integrated focus on literacy and writing competencies** throughout our GE curriculum.
4. To prepare our students for democratic engagement and participation in a rapidly changing and complex workforce, the Task Force recommends strengthening the emphasis in General Education on **critical and creative thinking**.

### *Alignment with CA Ed Code and Maintaining Section F for All Students at CSUN:*

The charge to the Task Force was to make recommendations for GE at CSUN that align with the CA Ed Code and maintain Section F. The chart below shows the California State University General Education-Breadth Requirements (40405.1), the current CSUN GE Plan R, and indicates recommendations for alignment with the CA Ed Code. Justification and support for maintaining Section F for all students including transfer students (FTT) follows. CSU GE Breadth Requirements and Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC)—two unit patterns by which students can fulfill lower division GE requirements at a community college prior to transferring to the CSU are also addressed. Most FTT students enter CSUN with CSU GE Breadth Requirements/ Certification.

**GE Task Force Recommendations to Align with 40405.1 California State University  
General Education-Breadth Requirements**

Minimum of 48 units total; minimum 9 units upper division

<b>CA Ed Code Requirements</b>	<b>Unit Requirement</b>	<b>CSUN GE Plan R</b>	<b>Task Force Recommendations to Align with CA Ed Code</b>
Communication in English Language Oral Comm Written Comm Critical Thinking	9 units	3 units Oral Comm (A1) 3 units Written Comm (A2) 3 units Critical Thinking (A3)	No change needed or recommended
Math/QR Science-Physical Universe and Life Forms with some Immediate Participation in Lab Activity	12 units	3 units Math (A4) 6 units Natural Sciences (B) 2 units lab (not required to be taken concurrently)=11 units	3 units Math 9 units Science (3 units required in Physical Science and 3 units in Life Science) 1 unit Lab (taken concurrently with associated lecture and integrated into 3 unit lecture; e.g. 2+1)
Arts, Literature, Philosophy, and Foreign Language	12 units	6 units in Arts and Humanities (C) 6 units in Comparative Cultural Studies (F)	No change needed or recommended
Human social, political, and economic institutions and behavior and historical background	12 units	6 units in Social Science (D) 6 units in US History and Government (Title 5)	No change needed or recommended
Lifelong Understanding and Development	3 units	3 units in Lifelong Learning (E)	No change needed or recommended

1. The Task Force on GE recommends maintaining Section F requirement for all students (FTF and FTT)
  - a. CSUN Section F requirement is NOT out of alignment with CA Ed Code
  - b. No data exist showing Section F requirement delays graduation or causes an impediment to graduation
  - c. Advisors, Graduation Retention Specialists, and senior staff in the Office of Admissions & Records state clearly that CSUN's Section F requirement for transfer students is NOT an issue and is NOT an impediment to graduation
  - c. Section F requirement for transfer students (FTT) is already addressed by the following:
    - Waived for transfer students with CSUGE or IGETC certification; listed on DPR as "SATISFIED THROUGH CERTIFICATION"
    - If transfer students don't have certification, students are advised to fill Section F requirement as part of 9 units of UD GE
    - Section F is also satisfied by scoring 3, 4, or 5 on AP Foreign Language or Literature Test (which gives students 6 units in Section F)
  - d. Data do exist demonstrating that Section F courses support student belonging, persistence, and retention
  
2. CSU Transfer Requirements/Certification: CSU GE Breadth and IGETC
  - a. California Community Colleges and other qualified institutions can certify completion of up to 39 lower-division semester (58.5 quarter) units applicable to GE-Breadth requirements or a total package of 37 semester (58.5 quarter) units for IGETC.
  - b. The CSU GE-Breadth Requirements is a lower-division 39 semester unit pattern. **Transfer students must** take specified courses in the area:
    - Area A—English Language Communication and Critical Thinking
    - Area B—Scientific Inquiry and Quantitative Reasoning
    - Area C—Arts and Humanities
    - Area D—Social Sciences
    - Area E—Lifelong Learning and Self-Development
  - c. The Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) is another unit pattern that California community college students **can use** to fulfill all lower-division general education requirements at any CSU or UC campus. The IGETC requires completion of a minimum of 37 semester units of lower-division work with a C grade or better in each course (C- is not allowed). Requirements of the IGETC are:
    - Area 1 - English Communication
    - Area 2 - Mathematical Concepts and Quantitative Reasoning

- Area 3 - Arts and Humanities
  - Area 4 - Social and Behavior Sciences
  - Area 5 - Physical and Biological Sciences
- d. CSU Transfer Requirements and Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum (IGETC) are lower division certification patterns stating that students **may** complete units at community colleges (CC) and CSU will accept CC GE unit patterns
- e. IGETC **does NOT required CSU** to use the same GE pattern/categories for FTF and lower division GE at CSU(N). EO 1100R does require CSU to use this pattern/categories. However, CSUN is NOT implementing EO 1100R. CA Ed Code (40405.1 GE Breadth Requirement nor 40405.2 Intersegmental General Education Transfer Curriculum) **does not** require CSUN to use this pattern.
3. Current CSUN GE Plan R is out of alignment in that CA Ed Code requires 12 units in math/science; CSUN GE Plan R requires 11 units. Specific recommendations to align CSUN GE requirements with the CA Ed Code follow.

*Specific Recommendations to Align with CA Education Code:*

### **Natural Sciences and Quantitative Reasoning GE Recommendation**

3 units Math/QR

9 units Natural Sciences with:

minimum 3 in Life Sciences

minimum 3 in Physical Sciences

minimum 1 unit Lab taken concurrently with associated Lecture delivered in a traditional face-to-face format versus online.

UD GE in Natural Sciences is not required to be Writing Intensive.

TOTAL 12 units.

(i) Quantitative Reasoning Defined

When GE Math meant the path to Calculus, the GE Quantitative Reasoning (QR)/Math requirement (area B4 for CSU, and A4 for CSUN) was clear and required no more explanation than “something more than intermediate algebra.” However, as QR/Math broadened to include Statistics and other quantitative areas, the meaning of college level QR/Math blurred and potentially overstepped restrictions against teaching material normally covered in standard high school curricula. In response, EO1100 (Revised) removed the “intermediate algebra” requirement. While beneficial, this left QR/Math as a vaguely defined notion, which could lead to problems as new curricula are developed.

For clarity, the CSUN Task Force on GE recommends the definition authored by the CSU Quantitative Reasoning Task Force.

<https://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/Reports/documents/QRTF.FinalReport.KSSF.pdf>

Click on Quantitative Reasoning Task Force (QRTF) Report

The ASCSU and the CSU Math Council endorsed this definition during the 2016-2017 academic year.

#### **General Definition of Quantitative Reasoning:**

*The ability to reason quantitatively is a stable combination of skills and practices involving:*

*(i) the ability to read, comprehend, interpret, and communicate quantitative information in various contexts in a variety of formats;*



- (ii) the ability to reason with and make inferences from quantitative information in order to solve problems arising in personal, civic, and professional contexts;*
- (iii) the ability to use quantitative methods to assess the reasonableness of proposed solutions to quantitative problems; and*
- (iv) the ability to recognize the limits of quantitative methods.*

*Quantitative reasoning depends on the methods of computation, logic, mathematics, and statistics.*

- (ii) What course criteria would be applicable when considering new course proposals for QR?

The above definition is aspirational. It is not sufficiently specific to guide the creation of Math/QR curriculum. It is also too vague to guide EPC in approving curriculum proposals in Math/QR. We need SLOs for Math/QR curriculum in GE to promote consistency within CSUN and to ensure articulation with other CSU campuses, the CCCS, UC's and K-12. The definition below evolved out of recommendations of the CSU Quantitative Reasoning Task Force.

*A QR/Math course (Area B4/A4 of GE) must be primarily about reasoning with mathematical models and quantitative information. It shall accomplish all of the following SLO's for B4/A4: Students shall*

- (a) Develop mathematical skills that go significantly beyond the California Common Core State Standards in Mathematics for High School Graduation;*
- (b) Develop and demonstrate a general understanding of how practitioners and scholars collect and analyze data, build mathematical models, and/or solve problems using quantitative methods; and*
- (c) Be prepared to develop their ability to use data and/or mathematics effectively after graduation in the various contexts defined by personal, civic, and professional responsibilities.*

- (iii) Out of the 9 unit requirement in Natural Science, 3 units are required in Physical Science and 3 units in Life Science

GE is fundamentally about breadth. Exposure to both the physical and life sciences achieves this and is consistent with CA Code 40405.1: "to include inquiry into the physical universe **and** its life forms" (emphasis added).

Significant flexibility is retained: students can meet this requirement with any combination of LD and UD courses, including the 1 unit of lab (i.e. 2/1 unit lecture/lab in one area would satisfy the 3 units in that area).

- (iv) Require one unit of lab concurrently with the associated lecture

Data show that students who are enrolled in the lecture and the lab concurrently do better in the lecture than do students who enroll in the lecture without the lab. The recommendation is consistent with CA Code 40405.1, “with some **immediate** participation in laboratory activity” (emphasis added).

When a lab is an integral part of the learning experience, it should be taken concurrently; yet, not all science classes require a lab component. Thus, we should not preclude courses that have no meaningful use of a lab. Additionally, labs require greater time investment for students (a 1-unit lab is 3 hours/week) than a 3-unit lecture, which is also 3 hours/week. Labs are also more costly. Therefore, the Task Force recommends requiring 1 unit of lab taken concurrently with the lecture.

The task force also recommends the 1 unit lab is delivered in a traditional, face-to-face mode versus online.

- (v) Make Writing Intensive (WI) optional for UD science GE

Under Plan R, all UD GE are designated as Writing Intensive. It is important that students practice their writing skills as they advance through the curriculum; however, it is also important that students practice their logical/quantitative skills, e.g. interpreting graphs, and drawing conclusions from data, etc. UD Science GE could emphasize these skills while UD GE in other areas of the curriculum could continue to emphasize writing. Note: (i) the CA Code does not include Writing Intensive (WI) requirement for UD GE, and (ii) making it optional does not preclude UD science GE from the WI designation.

### *Recommendations to Improve GE and Ensure Accountability for Quality Education*

#### **Faculty Development/Student Preparation/Advising Subcommittee Recommendations**

1. Faculty Development: Collaborate and share high-result practices among teaching faculty (tenure-track and lecturers); develop Faculty Learning Communities (FLC) centered on GE courses; increase full-time faculty teaching GE courses.

Currently, of teaching faculty teaching GE at CSUN, 75 % are lecturers. Increased support is needed for tenure-track faculty to teach GE classes to ensure content expertise and to support lecturers teaching GE courses. Additionally, 23% of GE classes are taught in fully online (12.5%) or hybrid formats (10.2%). DFU rates are higher in fully online classes (14.4%) versus face-to-face (12.6%). Size of class and deliver format (face-to-face; online/hybrid) also impact DFU rates (IR Data, Sp. 2018).

2. Communication with and Training of Advising Community: Bring advising community together including staff advisors, faculty advisors and stand-alone advisement areas such as athletic advising and international student advising to explain changes to the GE plan and provide training so there is a clear understanding of the GE Plan and best practices for advising students. Bringing the advising community together for these conversations will allow room for questions, clarifications and ensure GE advisement is consistent and correct.
3. Advising/Degree Planning Tools: Review, edit and update degree planning tools such as DPR and Road Maps to make sure they are as clear as possible and reflect the changes made to the GE curriculum.

**Oral/Natural Signed Language and Written Communication Subcommittee  
Recommendations:**

1. Use “natural signed language” along with “oral communication” to be inclusive of all our students at CSUN.
2. Provide ongoing professional development to assist faculty teaching and evaluating students’ writing. It is critical that faculty understand different styles of communication and language registers to effectively help students improve their oral and written communication skills.
3. Identify potential collaboration across campus to provide students opportunities to develop public-speaking skills.
4. Maintain flexibility with UD GE requirements (as in current Plan R); breadth in LD GE
5. Provide ongoing assessment of how changes based on EO 1110 (use of multiple measures to place students in writing classes) impact students’ progress through the required writing classes. In Fall 2018, 80%-95% of incoming FTF are projected to be placed in 115. Note that the term “multiple measures” is misleading as only one measure—the highest of several measures—is used: score of 550 or better on new SAT Reading and Writing section, EAP (CAASP Early Assessment Program exam), ACT English test score, 12<sup>th</sup> grade English with C- or better, weighted high school GPA of 3.3 or better is used.

The trend indicates a huge decrease in the number and percentage of students deemed not proficient. Year-by-year data show a remarkable increase in proficiency among FTF entering CSUN:

2014, 53% were not proficient.  
2015, 47.6% were not proficient  
2016, 37% were not proficient

2017, 26.01% were not proficient  
2018, 5% were not proficient

The changes in placement techniques, not changes in our student body and not changes in K-12 writing instruction, are the cause of this dramatic shift. In other words, with the use of multiple measures for placement as mandated by EO 1110, increasingly FTF are placed in 115.

Data gathered by the Office of Assessment (2014-17) indicate that on average students enrolled in 113B are not meeting expectations. The *Summary of Stretch Writing Assessment from 2014-17* states, "While certainly a limited data set, the pilot provides some evidence that the goal of having students in the last few weeks of 113 B and 114 B achieve a relative par in writing ability is not being met."

A similar pilot study of Stretch courses conducted in the College of Humanities found comparable results. The overall recommendation of that report was that students needed more help and support with their writing, not less. The report recommended increasing support to students testing into the 113 level, perhaps by requiring them to take an extra semester of writing at the 114 or 115 level (after completing 113A & B). It also recommended redesigning 113A and 113B to give students more gradual building blocks (such as a focus on reading comprehension in 113A) to improve their writing skills in a measured manner. The current projections to place 80%-95% of students into 115 (a one semester class), and thus, out of the two-semester writing sequence, is a step in the opposite direction, giving students *less* practice and writing support, rather than more.

### **Life Skills, Survival and Service Learning Subcommittee Recommendations**

1. Preserve the flexibility that currently exists in the upper division GE.
2. Promote more service learning designated courses in GE.
3. Allow Life Skill-Survival specific courses like HSCI 170 Emergency Procedures or KIN 149 Yoga to combine with other units to address the current CSUN GE Plan R shortfall in "Physical Sciences and its Life Forms."
4. Look at multiple unit courses that emphasize healthy living and permit counting in Section B.
5. Information Competency (IC) should incorporate digital research methods and techniques.
6. Add Digital Competency (DC) requirement to interface effectively and compete in a global, digitally interconnect world.

## **Holistic/Creative/Relational/Relevant/Innovative Learning Subcommittee Recommendations**

There are 15 primary skills to instill in our students as part of our lifelong learning GE courses. The sub-committee felt that this topic should be focused around skills, as this is what the students need to learn and take forward with them into the work force when they graduate.

Also, the sub-committee recommends that the focus through this GE class should be on **EFFECTIVE LEARNING** for our students – making them marketable for jobs when they go out into their respective fields. The 15 skills to focus on are listed below:

1. Innovative Thinking / Entrepreneurial Learning Traits
2. Growth Mindset
3. Abstract Thinking / Researching & Developing Ground breaking Solutions / Problem Solving in a team based environment
4. A desire to fill gaps
5. Motivation (Self and for others)
6. Creativity and understanding the creative process
7. Curiosity
8. Taking Risks without fear
9. Positive attitude
10. Being persistent at solving problems
11. Open-Mindedness
12. Vision – out of the box thinking, reframing the status quo.
13. Recognizing opportunities
14. Development of Culturally appropriate solutions
15. Working on teams / Creating Culture of Collaboration

There are two options on how these skills can be integrated into the GE curriculum.

Option 1: Instill these skills into a new junior level class, which would engage the students in learning these skills, which they could also use in their capstone experience class and they could also use these skills when they graduate and go into the work force.

Option 2: Modify an existing course, which focuses on GE lifelong learning and instill the skills into those existing courses so that way the students would have a larger variety of classes to pick from.

Some additional recommendations / guidelines provided by the sub-committee for the types of assignments that should be focused on in these classes:

1. General high-level assignments, which are largely discussion based so that the students are involved in learning
2. This ties in with merging theory with practice.
3. Students should be able to create a concept map on understanding the various skills and also their interconnections
4. Show students the relevance of these skills to their capstone class and also make them aware of the applications of these skills in the work place so they understand its usefulness.
5. Hold discussions with faculty who teach capstone projects in various disciplines so that the instructor teaching this class can be aware of the content of capstone courses in various disciplines and thus be able to make the connection for the students in the class.

### **Comparative Cultural Studies Subcommittee Recommendations**

1. Maintain Section F requirement for FTF and FTT; data show that requiring Section F is not an impediment to graduation or graduation rates; in fact, Section F courses support our students' educational goals and empower students to continue and graduate
2. Maintain flexibility in UDGE; breadth in lower div GE
3. Integrate emphasis on comparative cultural studies through all GE
  - Incorporate culturally responsive and relevant topics throughout all GE sections and not rely on Section F
4. Hold university accountable for:
  - Faculty development to increase consciousness and effectiveness of teaching faculty regarding our diverse students' lives, experiences, communities, and histories
  - More active recruitment and retention of faculty of color and other diverse faculty who bring in demonstrated support for diversity initiatives

### **Summary**

The Task Force engaged in transparent, consultative and inclusive processes to develop these recommendations. As indicated in the Task Force Statement, the recommendations will be shared with the CSUN campus community, Faculty Senate, and CSUN administrators. Beyond reaching consensus on recommendations that align

with the California Ed Code and maintaining Section F requirements, our intention was to engage in processes and practices that lead to informed decision-making and that are inclusive of all shareholders.