

September 7, 2012

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Diana Guerin  
Chair, Academic Senate, California State University

**FROM:** Ephraim P. Smith   
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer

**Subject:** Trustees Education Policy Committee—Agenda Item Three

At the September meeting the California State University (CSU) Board of Trustees will take up the issue of our upper-division general education (GE) requirement, which is virtually unique in higher education. In view of the current pressures to maintain quality, facilitate graduation, improve efficiency, and comply with legislative mandates, the presidents again have raised the issue, advocating elimination of the 9 semester/12 quarter units of upper-division GE. Although the idea has circulated for many years, discussion surrounding the shape and direction of a possible agenda item on upper-division GE continued until the last minute. We wanted to share the final item with you as soon as that was possible.

Education Policy agenda item three will be presented as an information item, and the board will not vote on it until the November meeting. We are asking the Academic Senate CSU Executive Committee to consider putting this on the September plenary agenda, General Education Advisory Committee agenda, and Academic Affairs Committee agenda, so that we can discuss what is expected to bring the following benefits to students:

- Many degree programs currently over 120 semester units or 180 quarter units will reduce to 120/180 units;
- there will be fewer high-unit degree programs in the CSU;
- access will increase as upper-division GE enrollments are shifted to allow additional lower-division courses for new freshman and community college transfers;
- access will be expanded as more CSU degree programs will be able to participate in the SB 1440/Associate Degree for Transfer program;
- fewer students will be subject to Third-Tier tuition fees; and
- students will have less need for financial aid and will carry less debt at the completion of their degrees.

**CSU Campuses**  
Bakersfield  
Channel Islands  
Chico  
Dominguez Hills  
East Bay

Fresno  
Fullerton  
Humboldt  
Long Beach  
Los Angeles  
Maritime Academy

Monterey Bay  
Northridge  
Pomona  
Sacramento  
San Bernardino  
San Diego

San Francisco  
San José  
San Luis Obispo  
San Marcos  
Sonoma  
Stanislaus

Dr. Diana Guerin  
September 7, 2012  
Page 2

Breadth of learning remains intact, with 39-40 (semester) units of lower-division GE requirements maintained (1/3 of degree requirements) and at least 27/36 units (nearly a year of study) remaining in the three areas of (1) math and science, (2) arts and humanities, and (3) social sciences—the only areas that have been required at the upper division. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges and Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) do not require upper-division GE courses. EO 1065 on CSU General Education-Breadth already requires that campus GE outcomes be organized according to the AAC&U Liberal Education and America's Promise framework, which also does not require upper-division courses. Therefore, we consider that this proposal offers the faculty and administration a concrete, yet quickly effective strategy for giving students a better chance of completing their degrees with an appropriately broad and diversified curriculum, of graduating with four-year degrees, of paying more affordable tuition fees, and of entering the workforce with sufficient baccalaureate-level knowledge and skills having been developed throughout their GE and major courses.

Please contact me or Chris Mallon (562) 951-4672 if you would like to discuss opportunities for consultation on this opportunity to improve access, increase course availability, improve graduation rates and make degrees more affordable to students in programs across the system.

c: Dr. Ron Vogel  
Dr. Christine Mallon  
Mr. Leo Van Cleve  
Mr. Ken O'Donnell