

Academic Senate CSU
401 Golden Shore, Suite 139
Long Beach, CA 90802-4210

www.calstate.edu/acadsen

September 10, 2012

To: Ephraim Smith
Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer

From: Diana Guerin, Chair, Academic Senate, California State University
Members of Extended Executive Committee:
Steven Filling, Vice Chair, ASCSU
Glen Brodowsky, Secretary, ASCSU
Christine Miller, ASCSU Executive Committee Member-at-Large
Catherine Nelson, ASCSU Executive Committee Member-at-Large
James Postma, Immediate Past Chair, ASCSU Executive Committee
Darlene Yee-Melichar, Chair, ASCSU Academic Affairs Committee
Bob Buckley, Chair, ASCSU Academic Preparation and Education Programs
Kevin Baaske, Chair, ASCSU Faculty Affairs Committee
Praveen Soni, Chair, ASCSU Fiscal and Governmental Affairs Committee
Mark Van Selst, Chair, General Education Advisory Committee

Subject: Trustees Education Policy Committee—Agenda Item Three

Your Memorandum dated Friday, September 7, 2012 (attached) informing ASCSU Chair Diana Guerin that the Board of Trustees (BOT) will take up the issue of the upper-division general education requirement at its September meeting was sent at 3:49 pm on that date. The agenda of the BOT was posted on the BOT website at approximately the same time as Chair Guerin received your Memorandum. We respectfully request that this item be withdrawn.

It is widely known that relations between administration and faculty at the CSU have been strained for some time. The inclusion of this item on the Board agenda is yet another example of why these problems persist and corroborates the concerns communicated to the Board of Trustees and Chancellor's Office just this year in AS-3051-11/FA, "Early Faculty Involvement in California State University (CSU) Initiatives" (attached). AS-3051-11/FA references six other resolutions expressing similar concerns dated since 2008. Please read it, particularly the first resolved clause.

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

In an effort to prevent issues such as those referenced in AS-3051-11/FA, the ASCSU Extended Executive Committee met with you, Ron Vogel, Ken O'Donnell, Eric Forbes, Beverly Young, and Gerry Hanley for the expressed purpose of discussing “new and continuing CSU initiatives relevant to ASCSU.” In point of fact, the specific purpose of this meeting was to discuss ways in which the ASCSU can be proactive rather than reactive in the shared governance process, consistent with the sentiments expressed in AS-3051-11/FA, as well as those expressed by Chancellor Reed in a meeting with the ASCSU Executive Committee on July 16, 2012. Our meeting with you took place at the Chancellor's Office one month later, on August 15th, barely three weeks ago. Chris Mallon and Marsha Hirano-Nakanishi were invited, but did not attend. Faculty Trustee Cheyne also attended. During this very positive and seemingly collegial meeting, no mention whatsoever was made that this major curricular change, that is, the eradication of upper division GE requirements on the 23 campuses of the CSU, was under consideration.

However, an ASCSU senator contacted Chair Guerin less than a week after this meeting, telling her that he had heard that a decision had been made centrally to eliminate the upper division GE unit requirements. As a follow up on that contact, Chair Guerin sent inquiries via email to your staff on August 23 and again on August 29, receiving no reply to either email. Telephone contact was eventually returned late in the day on September 6th. Nor was the chair of the General Education Advisory Committee, Dr. Mark Van Selst, contacted by anyone at the Chancellor's Office. Given that GEAC is a committee specifically charged with providing counsel on GE to the Chancellor and to the ASCSU, and given that faculty control of the curriculum has been a tenet of past practice, the content and timing of the proposal to the Board seems a clear violation of both Board policy and past practice (please see attached BOT report on collegiality and Cal. Gov't. Code §3561).

Let us set aside for the moment the critical issue of academic quality, which our committees will review in consultation with the campuses. That a change of this magnitude is even proposed when resources are stretched so thin and implementation would have such significant workload implications for the entire campus community—including staff, faculty, and administration—is disappointing, to say the least. Surely the campus presidents are aware of the negative impact on operations that efforts to reduce costs have already had, as referenced in the Committee on Finance Report (Agenda Item 1) on the same BOT agenda. As noted therein, “the present state of affairs is not sustainable”—and that assessment is absent consideration of the implementation of a major curricular change impacting thousands of students and potentially every undergraduate program in the CSU. That such a change is proposed with literally no consultation with the faculty, who have primary responsibility for the curriculum and for the quality of education provided by the CSU, is even more disappointing.

Our committee and plenary agendas were set last week, before this proposal was revealed. Further, several campuses are not in session until the end of the month, and faculty and staff will be working diligently to help students register for classes and begin the term. We respectfully request that this item be withdrawn. As a result of the development of the agenda item occurring outside of normal processes, it is clear that appropriate expertise has not been brought to bear.

Nor does it appear that the impact of the wholesale elimination of upper division GE on those majority of programs where upper division requirements (GE and otherwise) fit within the “minimum units” for a degree has been carefully considered. The normal collaborative governance process leads to stronger policies that are more likely to address stated deficiencies with fewer unintended negative consequences. Moreover, appropriate consultation including both GEAC and the ASCSU will explore a broader range of alternatives and allow for analysis of the underlying assumptions and an exploration of the resources needed to implement such a change.

Once again, the ASCSU has been placed in a reactive posture; withdrawing this item will provide time for that reaction to be grounded in a full exploration of facts regarding the impact of the proposal on academic quality and lifelong student success. Such issues should be the benchmarks of decision making on this matter, and full consultation to assess those benchmarks is not possible within the current time frame. We believe that the Board of Trustees should be provided with a more complete cost-benefit analysis in place of a less developed and potentially one-sided argument.

c: Chancellor Charles Reed
Campus Presidents
Board of Trustees
Dr. Ron Vogel
Dr. Christine Mallon
Dr. Beverly Young
Mr. Leo Van Cleve
Mr. Ken O’Donnell
Dr. Gerry Hanley
Dr. Marsha Hirano-Nakanishi
ASCSU
Campus Academic Senate Chairs
Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates