

Faculty Congress Town Hall Meeting on the System-Wide GE Redesign Proposal

December 10, 2021, 10am-12pm

Celia Bardwell-Jones provided a presentation on the proposal, and she and Sam Giordanengo of the System-Wide GE Redesign team remained to answer questions.

Q: How will WI requirements in our current GE system be brought over to the new proposal? A: they will be folded into the Written Communication capacities. WI courses can also be added to the system-wide proposal if a majority of campuses wants it, and individual campuses can also add it themselves.

Q: This looks problematic for transfer students from outside the UH System. A: The system is designed to fit the WICHE Interstate Passport Program.

Q: This new proposal seems to take away some of the exploration courses that are part of the current GE system. A: Breadth of knowledge was an issue the committee considered. The proposed system does allow departments to offer courses that fit into the system in a variety of ways, but there is no longer a requirement to take specifically humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences courses. When we focus on the skills students get from the course rather than the disciplines they come from, we retain an emphasis on exploration but add a more student-centered model.

Q: Why isn't there a science requirement at the foundations level? Putting it at the reinforcement level rather than foundations gives more flexibility for science classes to speak to a variety of different capacities.

Q: What about transfer students from outside the WICHE domain? A: It's a question of how different universities' diverse GE systems articulate into our system, which is also currently a problem. One of the committee's primary goals is to deliver a degree in four years and help reduce student debt.

Q: If we separate all the requirements from their homes in departments, don't we lose something from what different disciplines have to offer? Is President Lassner trying to lead us toward a more interdisciplinary approach? A: President Lassner took a hands-off approach, and getting rid of disciplines was never on the table. Once students complete the GE requirements, they will still need to complete a major, which would have its own requirements that reflect success within that discipline.

Q: A list of concerns have been forwarded to Faculty Congress:

- The lack of a language requirement: In the past Faculty Congress has voted to have a language requirement, and the administration has vetoed it. What's to stop that from happening again?
- There is more emphasis on Hawaii as a place of learning in the new proposal, but less on the Asian Pacific Rim, which constitutes an important part of our culture.
- The new proposal requires an understanding of the interaction between multiple courses, but the world is made up of many more than two cultures.
- Is there a way in the new system for students to complete not only the GE requirements but also some of their major requirements in a 2+2 format?
- Science courses are in the second tier, but scientific reasoning is a foundational skill.

A: In regard to the community college question, this is just a draft, and there will be ad hoc committees that look at these concerns, including one devoted to it at HCC. The system-level GE committee can't really address these concerns. On the language requirement, only KCC requires a universal second-language requirement. UHM has a second-language requirement, but every school can apply for a waiver of the requirement. One possibility is to make a tiered language requirement that only requires them for four-year requirements. On the Hawaii/Asian Pacific Rim question, these are intense ideological debates, and it's likely faculty members will continue to disagree about them. We could make the language requirement part of the reinforcement level.

Q: With fewer required GE credits, are students more likely to double major? Alternatively, might it make our degrees more like professional degrees? A: Yes, it seems likely that more students will double majors.

Q: Do we have data that quantifies how many students' journeys will be speeded up? Christine Sorenson of UHM has put together models of student success based on various possible models, but there isn't any data on the UH System's current proposal.

Q: Curriculum change is a justification for retrenchment in the UHPA contract. How can we be sure the university will not use this as a justification for retrenchment? A: The redesign committee asked the administration this question, and Lassner said there would be no retrenchment. Regent Wilson confirmed that budget is not to be considered in the redesign process.