



ACADEMIC SENATE, MERCED DIVISION  
GENERAL EDUCATION SUBCOMMITTEE (GESC)  
JACK VEVEA, CHAIR  
[jvevea@ucmerced.edu](mailto:jvevea@ucmerced.edu)

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, MERCED  
5200 NORTH LAKE ROAD  
MERCED, CA 95343  
(209) 228-7930

**May 1, 2018**

**To: UCM Senate Faculty**

**Re: General Education Program Bylaws**

Dear faculty of UC Merced:

Draft bylaws for the governing structure of the new general education program have been circulated to various Senate and School committees for comment, and a revised version has been returned to Undergraduate Council. Revisions were primarily in response to requests for clarification from the Committee on Rules and Elections. Point by point responses to the Senate and School committees' comments are appended to this memo. There will shortly be a call for Senate Faculty to vote on the revised bylaws.

Comments from several groups raised questions about the sustainability and resourcing of the general education program, about the appropriateness of voting Unit 18 lecturer participation in the general education governance structure, and about the need for bylaws at all. It is certainly true that open questions remain about some of those issues. The sustainability and resourcing questions must continue to be addressed by cooperation between Senate leadership and the administration. Opinions are divided about the bylaws' inclusion of a limited number of Unit 18 lecturers on program committees. Please note that under the bylaws, only one committee votes, and the others operate by consensus; further, the proposed Unit 18 membership is a small minority. Senate faculty are a majority representation, with representation from all schools. The goal is to support informed, comprehensive, and inclusive academic planning.

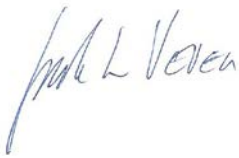
The bylaws do not address the open questions that will affect the ultimate success of the new program. Rather, they provide the administrative structure through which such questions can be addressed. They provide the means for ongoing assessment of the new general education program. They provide the mechanisms by which the structure of the new program can be altered in response to such assessments. In sum, these bylaws are the means for campus and faculty to engage in meaningful, comprehensive academic planning around general education.

Above all, these program bylaws formalize that general education is an academic program. An academic program should be governed by dedicated faculty and report through regular structures, e.g. to Undergraduate Council (as an approving body) and relevant Deans, with the Provost. This step is necessary to ensure faculty governance, regular assessment, appropriate resource planning, and comprehensive academic planning.

The new general education program is a reality and will go forward in the fall. A vote on the bylaws should not be viewed as a referendum on the program, but as a means of providing the guidance that will allow *all* constituents to help shape the future of the program. It is likely that the general education program we see two years from now will be substantially different from the version that is currently rolling out. That will be the direct result of the cooperative work of the committees described in the bylaws.

As has been previously announced, the General Education Subcommittee will host two informational Town Hall meetings in advance of the Senate vote, one on Thursday, May 3, from 3:30-5:00pm, and one on Monday, May 7, from 2:30-4:00pm, both in COB 2-390. We urge you to attend and engage in discussion of these issues.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jack L. Vevea". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J" and "V".

Jack Vevea  
Chair, General Education Subcommittee

## COMMENTS ON GE BYLAWS

### CRE Comments

- 1) Article I. Paragraph 3: In regards to sentence "... just as all faculty are members of College One ...", please revise to the following "... just as all Senate faculty are members of College One ..."  
(emphasis added).

***GESC RESPONSE:* The suggested language was adopted. Thank you.**

- 2) Article II. Section B: Clarify whether the "approval by two-thirds" applies to two-thirds of all Senate faculty or two-thirds of all Senate faculty who cast a ballot.

***GESC RESPONSE:* Article II. B. has been revised to state "...by two-thirds majority of Senate faculty who cast a ballot. " This is consistent with general voting conventions. Thank you.**

- 3) Article IV. Section A: In regards to sentence "The Chair is appointed for a three-year term by the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education (VPDUE), following a nomination process determined by the VPDUE in consultation with the Executive Committee." Please provide a description of the nomination process.

***GESC RESPONSE:* The following language has been added to Article IV.A. " Nominations will be solicited internal to the campus, and all Senate faculty will be notified of the nomination process." With this addition, the section now reads "The program chair for General Education is the Associate Dean for General Education. The Chair is appointed for a three-year term by the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education (VPDUE), following a nomination process determined by the VPDUE in consultation with the Executive Committee. Nominations will be solicited internal to the campus, and all Senate faculty will be notified of the nomination process. A Chair may serve two consecutive terms, after which he/she must retire for one full year before seeking reappointment."**

- 4) Article V. Sections A, B, and C: As related to the voting rights of the At-large Non-Senate faculty members (Unit 18 lecturers), please provide the rationale for voting permitted at the committee level so that it does not contradict the rule that non-Senate faculty members have no voting right unless the Senate faculty votes "to extend voting rights on a particular issue".

***GESC RESPONSE:* With respect to committees of the Academic Senate, [Senate Bylaw 35. C.2](#) states the following: "Only members of the Academic Senate may vote in Senate agencies and their committees when those agencies or committees are taking final action on any matter for the Academic Senate, or giving advice to University officers or other non-Senate agencies in the name of the Senate. Persons other than Senate members may be given the right to vote on other questions, such as those that involve only recommendations to other Senate agencies, but only by explicit Bylaw provisions." The committees established by the GE bylaws are not committees of the Academic Senate, therefore non-Senate individuals can be given the right to vote, without the need to "extend voting rights on a particular issue."**

- 5) Article V. Section D: As related to the "general call for Senate nominations", please clarify who will be ultimately responsible for populating the committees in the absence of nominations.

***GESC RESPONSE:* With respect to the question of populating committees in the absence of nominations, the third sentence of section of Article V. D. states "In the absence of**

**nominations, the executive committees of the Schools will propose Senate faculty representation."**

- 6) Article VIII: Please clarify if the nature of the annual faculty meeting and whether it is similar to the UCM Meetings of the Division.

***GESC RESPONSE:* It is somewhat similar in format because it brings together Senate and administrative representatives. The call/notice will be modelled after the Meeting of the Division's. It will differ in terms of agenda content. As described in the Article, agendas will include minutes from the previous meeting.**

- 7) Article IX (Voting and Quorum): Please clarify if it is the intent of this bylaw to make it at the discretion of the program chair to decide if the vote will be cast as an in-person vote vs. electronic vote. Members note that the current article could lead to resolutions with fewer than thirty submitted faculty member votes.

***GESC RESPONSE:* Thank you for raising this. The intention had not been to leave the mode of voting to the discretion of the chair. The Article has been revised to state that the mode of voting will be determined by the executive committee, and that the program chair will then communicate that decision to the General Education membership.**

- 8) Article X (Amendments): As related to voting for amendments to the bylaws, please state the type of majority vote required (2/3 or simple majority).

***GESC RESPONSE:* The Article has been revised to indicate that a two-thirds vote is required to amend the bylaws. To ensure the Article is internally consistent, the following language has been added to the final sentence under the section titled In-Person Voting "...except for bylaw revisions, which require a two-thirds majority of votes cast in favor of a change."**

#### **Natural Sciences Executive Committee Comments**

- 1) Why do we need these bylaws? Many of the proposed responsibilities should be the responsibility of current program chairs (student progress, assessment, etc.), particularly since GE co-opts existing programmatic coursework for most of its requirements. Why isn't a permanent sub-committee of UGC suitable to handle the rest? Or some minor changes to the College One bylaws so that the College One Executive Committee has responsibility over the remaining requirements?

***GESC RESPONSE:* The bylaws are necessary to provide a governance structure for the program so that the program can be managed as an integrative whole as intended in its design. Running a program – whether one that offers degrees or not – is an administrative function. This includes managing the process of assessing the program's effectiveness and ensuring that assessment results feed back into the program's curriculum and its organization and design. Senate committees, including the GESC, are legislative: they make policy, and are not designed for nor charged with governing and managing academic programs. In addition, the Senate Office is not resourced to administer academic programs.**

- 2) GE isn't an "Academic Degree Program", so I don't understand why that is the policy chosen to develop these bylaws. Similarly, as this is a campus-wide program, why isn't CoC tasked with populating the various proposed committees?

***GESC RESPONSE:*** General Education is a four-year academic program that undergraduate students must complete as part of their graduation requirements. CoC is not tasked with populating the proposed committees because CoC is charged with populating Senate committees or ad-hoc Senate/administrative committees. The proposed committees of the GE program are not committees of the Senate. They are like the committees of an interdepartmental graduate program.

- 3) Is there any example from other UC systems for a similarly formal structure for general education? Also, is there any example of an Associate Dean overseeing an academic program, given that it's the privilege and responsibility of the faculty to oversee the curriculum?

***GESC RESPONSE:*** Campuses organize General Education differently. The governance structure for the General Education program (which was referenced in the approved proposal) is intended to ensure clarity for all regarding responsibilities for managing the program. Without this, there would be no Senate faculty oversight of the program aside from the process by which courses are approved. This will not enable thoughtful stewardship of the program, including with respect to how resources are managed. (Clearly, significant resources were invested in the old General Education program, but they were largely invisible to the schools and faculties delivering the program and there were no mechanisms in place to make decisions about the how those resources were invested.)

Regarding the second question, programs, including graduate groups, are overseen by Senate faculty members with administrative appointments for the purposes of managing the program. Typically, these individuals hold the title of "chair." Given the scope of the new GE program, a decision was made to use the title of Associate Dean for the Senate faculty member who would hold the administrative appointment for managing the GE program. This decision was made as the scale of the GE program is very large relative to other academic programs on campus and will require cross-school collaboration.

- 4) Other than the Spark seminars, what courses does the GE program “own”, or have authority over? If the GE program wants to make changes to coursework owned by an academic program, but the program refuses, how is that conflict resolved?

***GESC RESPONSE:*** In addition to the Spark seminars, the GE program consists of the General Education requirements outlined in the [Proposal for the GE Program](#). The body governing the program is responsible for determining if courses, or learning experiences in the case of badges, meet those requirements. To be approved as a GE course, or as otherwise meeting a GE requirement, the body governing the program must determine that a course meets the criteria established in the [Proposal for the GE Program](#). These criteria ensure courses support student development of intended program learning outcomes.

- 5) Since GE is only one part of the faculty's responsibility, it's unclear why the GE program should have oversight over faculty workload and scheduling, rather than deferring to department chairs.

***GESC RESPONSE:*** The body governing the GE program is responsible for ensuring that students have timely access to the courses and learning experiences required to complete the GE program. To ensure these objectives are met, those governing the program must work with the majors and schools. It is intended to be a collaborative endeavor. That said, it is also true that Department Chairs are responsible for scheduling and executing academic

**programs. GE will be a component of these programs, with the Senate faculty in each Department determining their levels of participation.**

- 6) The proposed Voting and Quorum rules seem easily abused and could benefit from additional details. In particular, there should be a minimum length of time between informing faculty of an in-person vote and the timing of the vote, and there should be procedures for the faculty to request an electronic vote in lieu of an in-person vote.

***GESC RESPONSE:* With regard to in-person voting, the bylaws require that an agenda for a meeting of the General Education membership be circulated at least seven days before the meeting. This would provide at least seven days advance notice of a pending in-person vote. Rather than introduce procedures for requesting an electronic vote, the article has been revised so that the executive committee determines the mode of the voting.**

#### **School of Engineering Executive Committee**

- 1) A SOE representative will sit on the General Education Executive Committee as outlined in the proposed Bylaws, with the hope that the University will soon revise the General Education curriculum to be compatible with SOE's programs. We will also continue to participate in the current General Education Sub-Committee of the Undergraduate Council. We anticipate that both of these organizational structures will need to exist in parallel for some time in order to satisfactorily implement and govern the General Education program. Moreover, there appears to be insufficient teaching resources campus-wide to implement the General Education program and we challenge the Bylaws that empower Unit 18 lecturers to create their own curriculum. Otherwise, we will continue to encourage our colleagues to participate in General Education course certification and delivery.

***GESC RESPONSE:* The GESC thanks the SoE faculty for its commitment to participating in the proposed governance structure for the GE program. As noted in your response, the proposed governance structure is designed to address issues of program quality and delivery as identified through assessment processes. This would include the sufficiency of resources to deliver the program in support of intended program learning outcomes. However, as is the case with all academic programs, the level of resources provided will be determined by the administration. Concerns about unit 18 lecturers creating curriculum is addressed in the response to the UGC Minority Opinion on Bylaws ([page 3 of UGC's memo](#)).**

#### **UGC Minority Opinion on Bylaws ([page 3 of UGC's memo](#))**

- 1) Though we respect and enjoy working with Non-Senate colleagues in the same way as LRF and Lecturer colleagues, extending curriculum development responsibilities to Non-Senate faculty is at odds with Senate rules. Hence, we challenge Article II, Section A, "Non-Senate faculty are de facto affiliates of the program", as well as other references to Non-Senate faculty member participation. The language and delegated responsibilities are simply too broad, and they are inconsistent with Senate curriculum development policies. Coupled with the considerable uncertainty about financial resources needed to sustain SPARK seminars, there is potential for Non-Senate faculty to control substantial and long-term aspects of the curriculum.

***GESC RESPONSE:* As instructors of courses throughout program curricula, Unit 18 lecturers will continue to contribute to the delivery of General Education at UC Merced. For the program and our students to succeed, it is critical that all faculty, Senate and Non-Senate, understand the program's strengths and aspects that need strengthening. With this in mind, recognizing Unit 18 lecturers as de facto affiliates of the program enables their attendance at open meetings of the program (not Executive Sessions) so that they can participate in the program as instructors delivering program curriculum. As noted in the bylaws, and in keeping**

with Senate bylaw, it does not afford them voting rights on changes to program curriculum put to a vote of the program's Senate faculty. That right is reserved for Senate faculty, unless, by two-thirds vote of the Senate faculty, the right is given to Non-Senate faculty for a particular issue.

The inclusion of Non-Senate faculty on program committees is likewise intended to ensure that the program and its students benefit from Non-Senate faculty experience and knowledge garnered from instructing in the GE program. Indeed, given that half of the Spark seminars will be taught by Non-Senate faculty and that many Unit-18 lectures will be teaching GE courses through our existing undergraduate program course offerings, this level of consultation will be important for future programmatic decisions. Of the three committees established in bylaw, two are non-voting and decisions are made by consensus. The executive committee is the only committee that is empowered to make decisions by vote. In all three committees, the Non-Senate faculty constitute a minority of the members: two of nine voting members on the executive committee, two of seven on the Course Design and Delivery Committee, and three of nine on the Educational Quality and Evaluation Committee. With respect to the Course Design and Delivery Committee the course approval process is done in conjunction with the relevant school. As such, the process of curriculum development and approval will necessarily involve Senate faculty oversight. Given these structures, it is difficult to see how Non-Senate faculty could end up controlling substantial aspects of the curriculum over the long term.

#### SSHA Curriculum Committee

- 1) The SSHA Curriculum Committee reviewed the proposed bylaws for the GE Program. Overall, the general consensus was positive. Members perceived the bylaws as well considered and useful. One member worried about increasing bureaucracy.

***GESC RESPONSE:*** Thank you. The added bureaucracy will be offset somewhat by the disestablishment of the General Education Subcommittee of UGC. Having a clear structure for governing the program, which is entirely absent now, should help improve its functioning.

#### **SSHA Executive Committee**

No comment.