Academic Affairs (AA) Committee
End of Year Report, 2015-2016

The ASCSU Academic Affairs Committee had a busy year. Our efforts primarily coalesced around four themes, shared governance, transfer, student success and degree requirements. What follows is a summary of our work. More detail is included in AA meeting minutes and the full text of our resolutions. Both are available on the ASCSU website.

Resolutions
AS-3230-15/APEP/AA Establishing a Task Force on the Requirements of CSU General Education (GE) Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning (B4) Credit: This resolution calls for the ASCSU to establish a task force consisting of ASCSU senators, GEAC members, AA and APEP members, and other members from the Math Council, Chancellor’s Office and a member from the Academic Senate of the California Community Colleges, to examine the CSU GE B4 standards and the requisite content for quantitative reasoning and mathematical competency. The task force began meeting in Spring 2016 and is currently drafting its report. Approved unanimously, September 2016.

AS-3235-15/AA Chancellor’s Response to AS-3230-15-APEP/AA Establishing a Task Force on the Requirements of CSU General Education (GE) Mathematics/Quantitative Reasoning (B4) Credit: This resolution expresses concern about the Chancellor’s Office Response to AS-3230-15, which implies that the faculty is one voice among many, rather than the most significant “stakeholder” in curriculum design as it relates to CSU mathematics/quantitative reasoning requirements. The resolution urges the Chancellor’s Office to revise its response to clarify the faculty’s primacy over curriculum. It also urges the Chancellor’s Office to prioritize faculty leadership in efforts to address the larger questions of student success and inter-segmental alignment of curriculum across disciplines and segments alluded to in the response. November 2016.

AS-3238-15/AA (Rev) Role of California State University Faculty in the Evaluation of Courses for Transfer: This
resolution stems from concerns raised by campus Senate Chairs about the implications for course transferability raised by Assembly Bill (AB) 386, CSU Fully Online Courses and the advent of upper division GE courses in California Community Colleges (CCC) Baccalaureate (BA) degree programs. It affirms that campus curricula and the satisfactory completion of degree requirements are the purview of local campus faculty. It also encourages campus Academic Senates to develop policies or review existing policies for transfer of courses that: ensure the primacy of faculty in establishing the criteria for, and evaluation of, the transferability of courses; ensure communication between articulation officers, academic advisors, department chairs, curricular and shared governance bodies; maintain a clear and transparent process to meet degree requirements; facilitate progress toward graduation; and allow for the re-evaluation of articulated courses by faculty. Approved unanimously, January 2016.

AS-3245-16/AA Selection of Faculty to Serve on Campus Honorary Degree Committees: At its November 2015 meeting, the CSU Board of Trustees approved an Honorary Degree Policy that, among other things, specifies the process for the selection of faculty representatives on campus honorary degree committees. This resolution asserts that faculty representatives serving on campus honorary degree committees should be selected by faculty. It also expresses concern that the Trustees’ policy authorizing campus presidents to select faculty in consultation with faculty, rather than authorizing faculty to select their own representatives, violates AS-3160-13/EX/FA (Rev) Selection of Faculty representatives in Shared Governance and the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities. Approved unanimously, March 2016.

AS-3249-16/AA/FA/EX Concerns about Administrative Communications regarding Classroom Discussion of Possible Strike Action: This resolution expresses consternation over recent communications from some CSU presidents and administrators forbidding faculty to discuss the potential strike action planned by the California Faculty Association in their classrooms. It also affirms that the determination of the relevance of particular material to a class is the decision of the faculty teaching that class in the context of accepted pedagogical and disciplinary standards. The resolution also urges campus senates to communicate the content of this resolution to all faculty. Approved without dissent, March 2016.

Other Major Highlights

Ethnic Studies Task Force Report: In September 2015 the Committee had an extensive discussion about the Draft Report of the Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies. The Committee developed feedback for the task force. The task force report is expected shortly.
California Community College BA Degrees: In September 2015 the Committee discussed strategies for ongoing consultation about CCC bachelor’s degrees with our Chancellor’s Office Liaison Chris Mallon, Associate Vice Chancellor, Academic Programs and Faculty Development.

Course Transfer: In November 2015 the Committee had an in-depth discussion about the transfer of courses to, and between, CSU campuses. With the advent of CSU Fully Online Courses, CourseMatch and Community College BA degrees (including California Community Colleges [CCC] upper division General Education courses), faculty must monitor the course transfer process closely to make sure it protects academic quality at the same time as it fosters student success. Angela Williams, CSU Project Manager, Intra-system Enrollment explained the course transfer process in detail. Of particular interest to the Committee is the point at which campus articulation officers consult with department chairs in cases where there is no existing articulation agreement or no exact match with an existing course. Campus senate chairs have reported uneven consultation with faculty in this part of the process. Our discussion resulted in AS-3238-15/AA Role of California State University Faculty in the Evaluation of Courses for Transfer (see above).

Student Success: In January 2016 the Committee provided Senior Director O’Donnell with feedback on the draft prospectus for the Integrated Courses of Study for College Freshmen and Sophomores Collaboration funded by the James Irvine Foundation. The project is designed to strengthen lower division pathways for CSU students and community college students who intend to transfer to the CSU. The project uses the Associate Degrees for Transfer legislation (Senate Bill 1440) as a framework to support reforms that will promote a more seamless transition from lower to upper division and support students’ abilities to persist to graduation. The project emphasizes real-world relevance with contextualized learning experiences beyond the classroom. The committee had a fruitful discussion about the implications of the project for competency-based learning and the participation of industry representatives in setting course learning outcomes and performance tasks.

Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates’ (ICAS) Statement on Competencies in the Natural Sciences: In January 2016 at the Executive Committee’s request, we reviewed the Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates’ (ICAS) Statement on Competencies in the Natural Sciences. ICAS creates competency statements to advise high school students and their families about what kind of intellectual preparation is necessary for success in California higher education. Competency statements are submitted to the statewide senates of each segment for acceptance or rejection (not for amendment). The Committee thanked ICAS for its statement and was impressed by the thoughtful and thorough analysis
of how such competencies benefit all students. The committee also applauded the identification of the common elements of the sciences pertaining to each field that lie at the foundation of critical thinking. The Committee agreed that high schools should emphasize the value of maximizing the number of science courses students take. The Committee suggested the inclusion of biochemistry as one of the basic levels of chemistry. The plenary passed AS-3242-16/EX Acceptance of the ICAS Statement on Preparation in Natural Science Expected of Entering Freshman on a unanimous vote. ICAS competency statements are available at: http://icas-ca.org/competencies.

Title 5 Master’s Degree Requirements: The Committee continued a conversation carried over from 2014-15 about Title 5 Master’s Degree Requirements. Much of our time was devoted to addressing the proportion of graduate vs. undergraduate classes in graduate degree programs. Another consideration the committee discussed was whether or not there should be a separate Title 5 section for Masters of Fine Arts (MFA) degrees, similar to engineering and landscape architecture. In April 2016, the Committee discussed the Chancellor’s Office report “CSU Masters’ Degree Program Quantitative Characteristics,” prepared by our own Jodie Ullman, CSU San Bernardino. According to the report, all CSU campuses reported at least one masters’ program. The Executive Summary concludes that:

“The major “take home” messages are:
1. The proportion of graduate units in masters’ programs varies enormously, and non-systematically across campuses. Any examination of graduate programs should take the context of the campus into consideration.
2. The vast majority of programs (95%) meet the Title 5 requirement for at least 50% of program units at the graduate level.
3. Only 27% (9) of MFA programs, a terminal degree, require at least 90% of the program units at the graduate level.” (p. 2)

After reviewing the report, the Committee discussed “degree creep,” that is undergraduate work seeping into graduate programs; the impact any changes in the proportion of undergraduate vs. graduate courses would have on small programs; ways to maintain graduate-level expectations in programs that rely heavily on undergraduate or dual listed courses; and the importance of campus culture as a factor in the nature of graduate programs. No specific recommendations from the Committee regarding changes to Title 5 were forthcoming.

Faculty Workload Formula and High Impact Practices: In March 2016 the Committee talked with Ed Sullivan, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Academic Research and Resources about the formulas used to calculate faculty workload regarding
undergraduate student independent study (the infamous K and S factors) and funding for lab space for that research. Committee members are particularly concerned that if high impact practices are going to be promoted as a major mechanism for student engagement and success, then faculty workload data need to accurately reflect the time and effort that go into such practices and sufficient and appropriate space needs to be made available.

**Recommendations for 2016-2017**

The Committee recommends that the following items remaining on its agenda be taken up in 2016-2017.

**Campus Curricular Review Processes for New Program Proposals**: Campuses differ in their processes for review of new program proposals. The Committee is of the opinion that curricular review of new program proposals should occur at all levels, from the department to campus academic senates. We recommend that the 2016-2017 Committee research campus policies in this regard to determine if curricular review occurs beyond the school/college level. We recommend consideration of a resolution urging campus senates to review their new program proposal curricular review processes with an eye toward ensuring the breadth and depth a campus wide review will provide.

**CSU Budget for Electronic Library Resources**: The budget for the Electronic Core Collection (ECC) has been static for the past decade, while journal and database costs have risen by at least 5 percent per annum. This situation has forced the Council Of Library Directors (COLD) to cannibalize the collection or to seek one-time Chancellor’s Office supplementation for shortfalls. Many small campuses are dependent upon the ECC for affordable access to resources they would not otherwise be able to provide. At the same time, the demand for electronic resources puts pressure on the budget for hard copy collections. The Committee is in full support of increased funding for library collections, but needed more time to research the issue before bringing a resolution to the plenary. We recommend that the 2016-2017 Committee do additional research on the matter and consider a resolution supporting an increase in the library collections budget. A draft resolution is available in the Committee’s May 2016 dropbox folder.

**Community College Concurrent/Dual Enrollment (especially with high schools) and Time to Degree**: The Executive Committee referred this issue to AA. The concern is about the quality and integrity of the AA degree given an increased emphasis upon dual enrollment in community college/high school courses as a way for students to make timely progress toward a degree. We recommend that the 2016-2017 Committee do further research on this matter.
Difference between Lower Division/Upper Division: This is another referral from the Executive Committee. Given the advent of California Community College BA degrees, an unambiguous statement about the difference between lower and upper division course is needed so that all partners have a clear understanding of the expectations for upper division work in the CSU. We recommend that the 2016-2017 Committee consider formulating such a statement. The distinction used by the California Community Colleges is available at: http://extranet.cccco.edu/Portals/1/ExecutiveOffice/Board/2016_agendas/January/Attachment-3.2-BA-Handbook-2.pdf, p93-97.

Competency-based Education: The Executive Committee referred this agenda item to us as well. Competency-based education shifts the focus of teaching, learning and assessment from seat time, common course requirements, units and letter grades to more flexible and personalized options regarding the location and evaluation (including skills-based assessment) of student learning. The Committee had several robust discussions about the pros and cons of this approach, particularly as it emerges in the CSU/James Irvine Foundation collaboration known as the Integrated Courses of Study project. We recommend that the 2016-2017 Committee keep abreast of national developments in this area and continue regular updates from Ken O’Donnell about the Integrated Courses of Study initiative.

Graduation Rates: This item is another referral from the Executive Committee. The governor and state legislature are placing increasing emphasis on four-year graduation rates as a mechanism by which to measure the CSU’s “productivity” and efficiency. Given changes in the student population and the cost of higher education, the four-year graduation rate benchmark is outdated. It does not provide a nuanced enough picture of the successes and challenges facing the CSU as it continues its mission to deliver an excellent, broad-based education to its students. Especially worth contemplating is the way in which Integrated Postsecondary Data System (IPEDS) data (commonly relied upon for information about U.S. postsecondary institutions, see http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/) measures graduation rates in four and six-year intervals. The average time to degree in the CSU is four and one-half years, yet the data would put those students in the six-year category. We recommend that the 2016-2017 Committee consider a resolution urging the governor and legislature to use alternative or additional criteria to measure student success in the CSU.

Respectfully Submitted,

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