2010-2011 Annual Report: Contemporary Ethical Issues (E) Focus Board

IlanNoy, Chair

Board members: Helen Baroni, Ned Bertz, Spencer Leineweber, IlanNoy, NoriTaru

Comfort Sumida served as GEC liaison, while Jo-Anne Nakamoto ran everything and made sure Board members are completing their assigned tasks.

The Board had excellent support this year from the General Education office (Jo-Anne), but also worked productively with the Assessment Office.

A rubric for E Focus courses to evaluate Learning Outcomes that was developed by the Office of Assessment Office (with input from the E Board) was tested on a large number of student assignments by a group of faculty members in January.

The primary issue with regard to review of applications by the Board remains an incomplete answer to question 3a on the form: “Please describe the methods or approaches that students will learn in order to analyze and deliberate upon contemporary ethical issues.”

While the responses to this question are no more complete than before (after a re-writing of the form in Spring 2010), there are still a significant minority of applications that answer this question incompletely. The board, however, does not necessarily views this as a problem since the ensuing communication with the instructor in charge is usually very productive in clarifying the nature of E courses. This year, in all instances, instructors responded very well and very rapidly to our requests for additional information.

Proposal Review Statistics:

The Board reviewed a total of 46 applications; 44 were approved and 2 were withdrawn by the instructors (in one case the instructor was re-assigned to another course, in the other the instructor found out his E designation is still valid for the next two years). The Board approved 16 applications for Spring 2011, 11 applications for Summer 2011, and 17 for Fall 2011.

The on-line review system on over Laulima was very helpful for the Board. The GEC should consider moving to paperless applications since the transfer of the electronic files via fax sometimes results in difficult to decipher files (and increases the workload for the GEC staff).

Board members reviewed all applications before every meeting. Applications for which there was a consensus for approval were approved automatically. All others (even if there was a majority supporting immediate approval), were referred to a Board member to contact the instructor and request clarifications. In all cases, that dialog proved productive and the proposals were approved by majority in a second round of voting (on laulima).
The Board is concerned that several departments on campus do not offer enough E seats in their courses to enable their majors to take their E courses in their chosen academic field. The Board views workshops that target the general faculty community on campus as ineffective in dealing with this program (since voluntary participants will invariably come from departments that are well represented).

The Board decided to contact chairs of departments directly to open up direct discussions with them about the possibility of offering more E seats. Each Board member volunteered to contact a large under-represented department before the end of Spring semester and attempt to prod/nudge them into offering more E courses/seats. The departments that the Board identified are: Art (Helen), Electrical Engineering and Civil Engineering (Ilan), Marine Biology (Nori), Hawaiian Studies (Spencer), and Chemistry (Ned). Reports about these contacts will be forwarded to Jo-Anne so that the 2011-12 Board can continue pursuing this issue.