

**University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa Faculty Senate  
General Education Committee  
Fall 2008 - Spring 2009 Annual Report  
Submitted by Scott Rowland, Vice Chair**

The following is a list of accomplishments, decisions made, and issues addressed by the General Education Committee (GEC) and its associated Foundations, Diversification, and Focus boards. We reviewed proposals for one new Foundations course, approximately 50 new and renewal Diversification courses, and over 300 new and renewal Focus courses. Most of our time and effort was spent dealing with the problem that at least 50% of incoming first-year students do not fulfill their Foundations requirements (FW, FS, and 2 FG) during their first year. We are hopeful that FW non-compliance has been resolved, but FS and FG will require additional work, as noted below.

- A. With help from Megumi Makino, we clarified language in the General Education (GE) section of the UH Mānoa Catalog. The changes were organizational and grammatical rather than material; because they did not involve changes to GE requirements, this did not require approval by the Faculty Senate.
- B. The Oral Communication Focus Board (Amy Hubbard - chair, Tamara Albertini, Dominic Franchini, Margit Watts, Jan Sung, Randy Hensley) received 101 proposals for new and renewal O-Focus courses. Here are the results: New (individual), 43; Renewal (individual), 37; Staff-based (no instructor assigned yet), 4; Course-based (i.e., all sections), 4; Pending (as of 4/15/09), 12. One proposal was denied.

Based on the proposals that were received and feedback from proposing instructors, in Fall 2008 the O-Focus Board re-worded the on-line instructions for proposing an O-Focus course. They noticed some improvement in the proposals that were received, and additional, slight changes were made at the end of the spring semester. In addition, an Assessment Rubric was sent to all Spring 2009 O-Focus instructors; they were encouraged to use the rubric and provide feedback about it to the Mānoa Assessment office.

Finally, the O-Focus Board produced a list of departments that, for their own students' sake more than anything, should offer more O-Focus courses. These include TIM, Sociology, Biology, Botany, Chemistry, Architecture, Communication, and HNFAS.

- C. The Contemporary Ethical Issues Focus Board (Spencer Leineweber – chair, Dian Dooley, Ilan Noy, Jonathan Okamura, and Ned Bertz) received 78 proposals for new and renewal courses. 26 were approved, several are still being reviewed, and 5 were denied.

The E-Focus Board found that 26 of the 78 proposals required additional information from the proposer before they could be reviewed. The E-Focus Board suggests that the entire application process be form-fillable on line. This can be set up to insure that all required information is entered before the application can be turned in.

- D. The Hawaiian, Asian, and Pacific Focus Board (Kekai Perry – chair, Lonny Carlile, Williamson Chang, Will McClatchey, and Noenoe Silva) reviewed 34 new and renewal proposals: 32 were approved and 2 are still being reviewed.

The H-Focus Board, noting that processes relating to H-Focus designations are relatively stable, decided that in the future, it will consider proposals for course-based H-Focus

designations. It will also consider 1-semester staff-based H-Focus designations for situations where an instructor has not yet been assigned.

The H-Focus Board also worked with the General Education Office to implement last year's agreement to participate in a UH System H-Focus Board. This H-Focus System Board had a productive meeting on April 23, 2009.

- D. The Writing Focus Board (Tom Hilgers – chair, Ernestine Enomoto, Kenton Harsch, Jim Henry, Sterling Keeley, Trina Kudlacek, Nobuko Ochner, Lourdes Ortega, Kathleen Sands, and Weilin Qu) reviewed multiple new and renewal W proposals. As a result of W Board action, the UHM faculty was able to offer 510 W classes in F08 and 558 W classes in S09. However, the distribution of W classes is uneven. In many of the largest majors, students have ready access to 1 or 2 W courses only; they have to fulfill most of the W graduation requirement through classes outside their majors. Hilgers will contact several department chairs during summer to see if the number of W seats in those departments can be increased.

The W Board participated in discussions about how to make FW classes more effective for first-year students (a discussion mentioned below). It also will work over the summer to launch assessments of student writing using samples from Sociology, History, and perhaps Business.

- E. The GEC itself must approve course-based Focus designations once they have been recommended by the appropriate Focus board. In 2008-2009, we approved 17 of these. The GEC must also approve courses that have multiple Focus designations, also once a recommendation has been made by the relevant Focus boards. In 2008-2009, we approved 6 of these.
- F. The Foundations Board (Henri Casanova – chair, Jim Bayman, Daphne Desser, Jodie Mattos, Leilani Takeuchi, Jim Tiles, and Deborah Waite) received one FW proposal to review in 2008-2009, and it was approved. This was ENG 190, a course for students who transfer to UH Mānoa after their first year, but lack an equivalent FW course. This course is part of the effort to make ENG 100 a freshman-only FW course, and thereby help with first-year FW compliance (see below). The Foundations Board did not receive any FS or FG proposals to review in 2008-2009.

The Foundations Board chair will participate in the Multi-Campus Foundations Board meeting on April 27, 2009.

The Foundations Board spent most of its time during 2008-2009 wrestling with the FS non-compliance issue. They were tasked with looking for solutions to this problem by the GEC. Their own work and a joint Foundations Board and GEC meeting on April 3, 2009 form the basis for much of the Foundations Compliance discussion presented below. The Foundations Board also began to look at non-compliance with regard to FG courses.

- G. The Diversification Subcommittee of the GEC completed its 5-year review of courses and reviewed over 50 requests for new or changed Diversification designations.
- H. The GEC met with staff from the UH Mānoa Assessment Office, who were urged to work with all the boards in keeping the momentum of last year's successful pilot programs going.

## The Foundations Compliance Issue

Foundations courses comprise one of four General Education requirements at UH Mānoa (the other three are Diversification, Focus, and for most majors, Hawaiian/second language). The Foundations requirement consists of 1 Written Communication (FW) course, 1 Symbolic Reasoning (FS) course, and 2 Global and Multicultural Perspectives (FG) courses. The UH Mānoa Catalog states that “Students complete the Foundations requirements during their first year at UH Manoa...” However, in practice only about 50% of freshstudents complete their 4 required Foundations courses during their first year. There are multiple reasons why Foundations requirements are not being met in a timely way by a large proportion of the students, but for each of FW, FS, and FG there seems to be a different primary reason.

Since the Spring of 2008 the GEC, the Foundations Board, and an FW task force have been looking into reasons for FW non-compliance and ways to fix it. The main problem has been that there have not been enough classes to accommodate all the first-year students. Some of this problem can be traced to the fact that many seats in these classes were taken up by second-, third-, and even fourth-year students who hadn’t previously gotten around to taking their FW course. There was therefore a backlog which never cleared. The GEC, Foundations Board, and FW task force implemented a number of measures to deal with this problem: 1) Starting in Fall 2009, English 100, the course that by far most students take to fulfill their FW requirement, will be open only to first-time first-year students; 2) ENG 190, a new FW course, will be available for students who transfer to UH Mānoa with 25+ accepted credits, but haven’t yet fulfilled UH Mānoa’s FW requirement; 3) students beyond first-year status with their FW requirement yet unfulfilled were given a number of options throughout 2008-2009 to meet FW; 4) starting in Fall 2009, these options will no longer exist, and remaining students who have not fulfilled their FW requirement during their first year will have to take an FW course at a community college, through Outreach/Summer Session, or outside of the UH System; 5) additional sections of ENG 100 were created with money from the Chancellor’s office (to prevent future backlogs, even with a temporary 15% FW class-size increase, additional monies will probably again be required); and 6) language in the UH Mānoa Catalog has been changed to reflect the fact that the FW requirement *must* be completed during a student’s first year.

The GEC is cautiously optimistic that the first-year FW compliance issue has been resolved. The backlog is mostly gone, and with sufficient seats in ENG 100 being available to first-year students (and only to first-year students), there shouldn’t be future backlogs.

With regard to FS, there are multiple problems, some of which are related. The first is getting students to sign up for FS courses, because many are afraid of taking math or logic. Second, many who take these courses don’t pass the first time. Finally, because there are some 200-level FS courses (MATH 241 in particular, but there are 5 others), students reasonably assume that the course can be taken in their second year. In fact, anecdotal evidence suggests that students in some majors are advised to take their (200-level) FS course in their sophomore year.

The FS compliance issue is more difficult to solve than the FW issue. To date, the GEC and Foundations Board have spent many hours looking at FS data, and we have concluded that the best solution is to make FS a two-year requirement. In other words, a UH Mānoa student will be required to fulfill his/her FS requirement before achieving junior status. One can argue that this solution is merely caving in to the lack of compliance. On the other hand, we have more than 7

years of experience with the current FS requirement, and it seems apparent that without major changes to the list of courses being offered and/or to the nature of incoming students, somehow forcing first-year FS compliance is impractical. To allay some of the criticism that this is merely giving in, we propose that second-year FS compliance be enforced, both by placing holds on the registration of would-be juniors who haven't yet completed the requirement, and by limiting enrollment in 100-level FS courses to first- and second-year students. We therefore will be requesting that the Faculty Senate take this suggestion into consideration early next fall. At the first Faculty Senate meeting in Fall 2009, the GEC will present a resolution to change the General Education language to state that FS is a requirement that must be fulfilled by the end of a student's second year.

The FG compliance issue is understood the least, but it appears to be mostly due to the fact that students are required to take 2 FG courses. Specifically, although there are a lot of FG courses, students in some majors have trouble fitting two of them (each of which has to come from a different sub-category) into their first two semesters. Additionally, some FG courses are not offered every semester, so students may put off fulfilling their FG requirement until their desired course is offered. Finally, because most FG courses are not pre-requisites to many majors (unlike FS), advisors often do not specify particular FG courses to take, making students less aware that FG is currently a first-year requirement. Given this information, it is likely that the same Faculty Senate resolution noted above will also suggest making FG a requirement that must be fulfilled by a student's second year.

In closing, the GEC thanks the UH Mānoa faculty for making General Education a true across-the-faculty concern. Nearly one thousand of our faculty members are teaching one or more GE classes each academic year. This shows an incredible degree of faculty commitment to the foundations of our undergraduate curriculum across our many and varied disciplines. This is unusual at a Research I university, and provides our undergraduates with many opportunities to interact with faculty members who at other universities are available to relatively few. We trust that our students' educational experiences are enriched by the extensive and frequent contact that our faculty provides.