Overview:
Shawn Ford opened the meeting and informed the group that the meeting’s agenda was to:
1. vote to “approve, reject, or abstain” in regards to the proposed explanatory note
2. discuss possible alternative measures should the proposal be rejected

A few Working Group members stated that a vote on the proposal was not appropriate given the remaining ambiguities regarding the meaning of “quantitative” and “significant” and the reasons the explanatory note was written. However, after a brief discussion, the group voted on the proposal. Following the vote, the group discussed alternatives to adopting the proposal as written. The meeting concluded with a statement of action items to be completed before the next meeting.

Discussion:
The meeting’s discussion began with a few members revisiting the prior meeting’s discussion about definition of terms used in the explanatory notes and the reasons for the proposed notes. A straw poll was suggested to encourage the group to move forward. This suggestion was rejected as members thought a straw poll was done during the last meeting. Attendees instead began determining a way to proceed with the actual voting.

Bontekoe suggested the group vote to approve the proposal, with a provision that the current meaning of quantitative be retained. He stated that existing FS classes such as PHIL 110 will continue to hold an FS designation if the current meaning was retained. Concern was expressed by a few members that such a solution did not address the poor mathematics skills of graduating students. Sammons gave the history of the proposal including the reasons it was written. He said that Hallmark Five was in need of clarification, so the explanatory note was written. It was agreed that “the logic of the proposal is clear”; the question is whether or not the explanatory note is the vehicle for meeting the intended goal of increasing mathematic proficiency for UH students.

Schafer suggested a three-way vote: Yes, Yes with revised language, or No. A vote was then taken with Schafer’s suggested three-way format. The result was:
0 Yes
7 Yes with revised language
3 No
5 Abstentions

Ford declared there was no consensus and opened the floor for discussion. Pine restated the need for clear definitions of terms used in the explanatory note and by WASC and again suggested an additional FQ requirement be put into place. He suggested having a committee of math professors define “quantitative” and what an FQ requirement should contain.

Ford responded to Pine’s suggestion by stating the working group had the ability to define the terms and that asking another committee to do the defining would likely lead to results the working group would not be happy with. He reminded the group that their charge was to make recommendations; the group does not make decisions but is expected to generate ideas, including definitions.
Schafer suggested the proposal be accepted until such time that an FQ requirement was established. Discussion about the wording of this suggestion and the feasibility of proposing a new requirement followed. Bontekoe stated he understood the argument for the addition of an FQ requirement, but he felt Manoa’s administration and students would not readily accept any additions to graduation requirements. He also restated an earlier argument that the group could not ignore the fact that a math requirement was beyond the abilities of many students.

Pine asked if the issue was a math or WASC problem. He said the origin of the proposal determined the working group and UH System responses. Sammons shared that upon recently returning form a WASC Vendor Conference, he confirmed with the Manoa VCAA’s office that this is now a WASC issue. He stated the Five Pillars that WASC is emphasizing include Quantitative proficiency. However, each institution can define quantitative skills and what constitutes proficiency. Sammons also stated that although WASC junior and WASC senior are not in alignment, they both will be affected by the Five Pillars because this matter is a foundational issue.

Pine then reminded the group of UHMC’s numeracy requirement and introduced the issue of language differences in WASC versus the FS Hallmarks. He stated the WASC documents use the word “ensure” while the Hallmarks use the word “expose” when addressing quantitative skills and student proficiencies. He felt that these were important distinctions.

Pine suggested the UH System adopt UHMC’s numeracy requirement to ensure students are gaining quantitative skills. He stated he taught quantitative skills in his PHIL 110 classes, but the amount of instruction led to student “exposure” to the skill. He said he could not “ensure” they had learned quantitative skills. Pine stated a system wide numeracy requirement would satisfy WASC and benefit the students.

Both Ford and Sammons reiterated the earlier assertion that Manoa will not adopt an additional requirement. Ford said he was told after a presentation to the Council of Chief Academic Officers (CCAO) that a new requirement would not be considered. Sammons said he received his information from Manoa administrators. Bontekoe supported this information by stating that Manoa’s Colleges of Arts and Sciences already have many requirements and will not be open to adding even one more.

Acks asked if a minimum Compass score could be used to ensure quantitative literacy. Sammons said Manoa does not use Compass and would not be likely to institute the exam or any other proficiency test. A brief discussion of testing options and a renewed exploration of the proposal’s wording followed.

Ford reminded the group that they are being asked to look at the explanatory note, not the full document that proposes the change, which includes the consequences section containing the ambiguous word “significant.” Sammons stated that the group should just forget about the word since each campus Board has the authority to determine how “some quantitative skills” would manifest itself in each FS course. Sammons then proposed that the wording “quantitative skills” found in the proposal be changed to “computational and/or quantitative skills.”

Bontekoe stated that the suggested rewording would leave PHIL 110 as an approved FS course, but Pine felt the issue of math proficiency was still unaddressed by the suggested rewording. The subsequent discussion led to general agreement that the rewording would encourage more disciplines to submit valid FS course proposals. Perusse and others pointed out that PHIL 110 has computational elements and that even statistics courses can have proofs and other qualifying elements.

Schafer summed up the several proceeding comments by stating that since many people have difficulty understanding the FS Hallmarks, “examples would help immensely.” Bontekoe stated that both truth tables and tree diagrams are computational and taught in PHIL 110. It was suggested that such examples would be well-placed in the explanatory notes, but that the placement did not need to be determined at this time.

The discussion briefly turned to the history of statistics classes and the FS Hallmarks. Sammons shared that the Hallmarks were written to rule out “pure statistics.” He stated the revised wording may now allow statistics classes to become FS courses. Perusse shared that he teaches proofs in his statistics classes, so he saw no reason for statistics courses to continue being automatically excluded from FS designations.
Ford then asked the group to turn their attention to the suggestion that computational and quantitative examples be collected and added to the FS Explanatory Notes. The group was divided about the need for examples of computation. Some members thought since “computation equals math” there was no need to develop computational examples. Others thought examples of both computational and quantitative course content would be helpful to students and faculty. There was general agreement that the Hallmarks would benefit from some type of example section. It was decided that Schafer would set up a Google Doc for members to send their suggestions of possible computational and quantitative examples and to make comments about the posted examples.

Ford next directed the group to consider the contention by some group members that the proposal and all other measures discussed thus far were simply “Band-Aids” for the larger issue of student math and symbolic reasoning proficiency. In response, Myers asked if the group should consider changing the Hallmarks rather than simply rewording a proposed explanatory note. She suggested making Sammons proposed rewording of the explanatory note the new Hallmark Five. Consequently, the Hallmark would no longer read “not focus solely on computational skills but instead would say “focus on computational and/or quantitative skills.” Myers also suggested making the current Hallmark Five an explanatory note, reading “The course will not focus solely on quantitative skills.”

Several group members immediately expressed support for the suggestion, while others continued to state that the problem of ensuring math proficiency for students was not solved by this latest idea. Concern was also expressed about the proposed changes’ ability to meet the new WASC requirements. The group was reminded that WASC is allowing each institution to define what students should be learning to fulfill the “quantitative skills” requirement.

Bontekoe stated again that there are many students in majors such as Art and Dance as well as underprepared incoming students that need an option to a computation based requirement. He stated the group needs to be “realistic about what we’re expecting these students to have the aptitude to do.” Seffrood asked if the group was supposed to consider the changes suggested for Hallmark Five without concern for math skills. Requests followed for clarification of the relationship between the proposed change to Hallmark Five and an increased effort to raise student math skills. Bontekoe said we are trying to avoid a requirement that specifically involves math.

The discussion that followed included diverse opinions about the topic. Okumura recalled that when the current Hallmarks were instituted, math instructors had to adjust their classes to include proofs. She asked why philosophy instructors could not add math into their PHIL 110 course. Sammons and others stated philosophy classes could include math if it was needed, but the proposed change to Hallmark Five would not require them to do so. Bontekoe stated that adding math would take away from quantitative skills. Ford stated he would set up a group discussion on Laulima for members to share their additional thoughts on this and other matters discussed at the meeting.

Ford then summarized the actions taken by the group and asked if there were any more comments or concerns that group members would like to share before ending the meeting. There were no additional statements, so Ford provided the group with the action items to be completed before their next meeting.

Ford first reminded the group that they did not need to “craft language” for the proposed changes since the wording had been decided. The Working Group was instructed to:

1. Examine the current wording of the proposed changes with the appropriate representatives at their individual campuses with the goal of making a recommendation to adopt or reject the amendments to Hallmark Five and the explanatory notes. Ford stated the members should use Laulima to provide information about the discussions at their home campuses.
2. Use Google Docs to post examples of quantitative and computational course material. Schafer agreed to send the link to all group members and stated access would be limited to only the Working Group and support staff.

The meeting ended at 2:25pm. The next meeting is scheduled for 1pm on Friday, March 16, 2012.

Minutes prepared by: Dawne Bost, UHM GEO/MWP