

**2016-17 ACADEMIC SENATE PROGRAM REVIEW OF THE
GENERAL EDUCATION: FOUNDATIONS OF SOCIETY AND CULTURE**

Internal Reviewers

Adriana Galvan, Review Team Chair, Undergraduate Council, Psychology
Sule Ozler, Undergraduate Council, Economics

External Reviewers

Stephen Weatherford, UC Santa Barbara, Political Science
Steven Dandaneau, Kansas State University, Undergraduate Studies

Date of Site Visit: January 9, 2017

Date of Report: February 6, 2017

Approved by Undergraduate Council: April 7, 2017

Appendix I: External Reviewers' Reports
Appendix II: Site Visit Schedule
Appendix III: Self-Review Report (The self-review report was previously distributed. If you need a hard copy, please contact the Academic Senate Office at extension 53851.)

2016-2017 Academic Senate Program Review General Education: Foundations of Society and Culture

1. Introductory Statement

The current General Education (GE) curriculum at UCLA was instituted in 2002. As of Fall 2006, all incoming freshman satisfy their GE requirements by taking a requisite number of courses across three foundational areas: Arts and Humanities, Society and Culture, and Scientific Inquiry. This review committee was tasked with reviewing the Foundations of Society and Culture.

The Review Team consisted of Adriana Galvan (Review Team Chair, Undergraduate Council Member), Sule Ozler (Review Team Member, Undergraduate Council Member), external reviewer Stephen Weatherford (Associate Dean of Social Sciences, UCSB) and Steven Dandaneau (Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, Kansas State University). The Review Team learned about the program through interviews with select administrators, faculty from various departments who service GE courses, teaching assistants and undergraduate students on January 9, 2017. We also reviewed the following documents: Self-Review Report of the General Education Governance Committee's Ad Hoc Review Committee, Review Report from 2008-2009, Progress Report of the program (2011), memos from Dean and Provost of Undergraduate Education Patricia Turner, and from Catia Sternini, Chair of the Committee on Diversity and Equal Opportunity. This report is based on these collective sources of information about the Foundations of Society and Culture GE area.

Prior to the site visit, on December 6, 2016, the internal review team members met with Professor Muriel McClendon, Chair of the General Education Governance Committee, to discuss the self-review. The team also met with Dean and Vice Provost Patricia Turner on December 14, 2016, to discuss the self-review.

2. Strengths and Achievements of the Program

The mission statement for the Society and Culture Curriculum is: *“The aim of courses in this area is to introduce students to the ways in which humans organize, structure, rationalize, and govern their diverse societies and cultures over time. These courses focus on a particular historical question, societal problem, or topic of political and economic concern in an effort to demonstrate to students how issues are objectified for study, how data is collected and analyzed and how new understandings of social phenomena are achieved and evaluated.”*

Each course that satisfies this requirement is classified as one or both of two subfields, Social Analysis and Historical Analysis. Each academic unit sets out its required number of courses of each subfield. Students in most of UCLA's units are required to take one course from each subfield plus one course from either subfield. Students in the Samueli School of Engineering and Applied Science need take only two S&C courses, one from each subfield.

There are currently 293 courses approved for the Society and Culture subfield. These courses span 31 different departments, 7 interdepartmental programs, 2 centers and 3 lower division

programs. 163 of these courses are approved for historical analysis credit and 130 are approved for social analysis credit; 70 courses are approved for either historical or social science credit. According to data provided in the self-review, the majority of courses (78.3%) are taught by ladder faculty (278 courses) and 21.7% are taught by lecturers, adjuncts or teaching fellows (77 courses).

The most heavily enrolled courses over the past 7 years are: History 2 (average enrollment of 444 students), Political Science 40 (318 students), Political Science 10 (292 students), Anthropology 33 (291 students), History 20 (290 students), Classics 30 (288 students), Anthropology 9 (285 students), Philosophy 6 (285 students), Sociology 1 (285 students), and Classics 20 (278).

The Review Team had an opportunity to meet with faculty from several departments, including Sociology, Anthropology, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures, History, Art History, and Political Science. All were highly impressive faculty with clear passion and engagement with undergraduate teaching. However, the majority of them also noted that when teaching a course that fulfilled the SC GE requirement, they did not discuss the GE requirement with their students. Some were not even aware that their course fulfilled a requirement. Others noted that after submitting a syllabus to the GE program for approval, it got approved but there was no conversation with GE administration about the goals of the GE program, SC foundation or suggestions for improvement (if any). A few faculty members questioned the role and activities of the GE Governance Committee (e.g. ‘the relationship between governance committee and the faculty is lacking. Would be great to have an open forum to discuss GE and/or to receive feedback about syllabi’).

Course Review

To ensure that courses in the SC foundation area meet the ‘pedagogical aims outlined in the mission statement’ and advance ‘at least two of UCLA’s GE principles, or educational aims, i.e. general knowledge, integrative learning, ethical awareness, diversity, and intellectual skills development,’ the GE *ad hoc* committee established a process of randomly sampling and reviewing 10% of each foundation area’s course syllabi on a yearly basis. In the self-review, it is noted that the SC foundation area workgroup ‘reported that the classes they examined are well organized, pedagogically sound, and meeting both SC mission statement aims and university expectations’.

To achieve new SC approval, courses are reviewed by the GE Governance Committee’s Foundations of Society and Culture Workgroup. Course instructors submit the course syllabus as well as a standardized course information sheet that describes how the course fulfills the SC mission statement and how it adheres to the more general GE principles. The vast majority of applications are approved. In the previous review in 2008-2009, it was noted that the SC Workshop “provides feedback to instructors whose course applications have been rejected, and negotiates with them over modifications that may make the course acceptable as SC-GE.” The experience of faculty we met with who had applied for course approval did not align with this statement. They noted that all courses they had submitted for approval had been, indeed, approved and that there was no feedback from the Workgroup.

For this self-report, the committee also reviewed three high enrollment SC courses through faculty interviews during Spring Quarter 2016: History 13, Sociology 1 and Chicana and Chicano Studies 10. John Toledo, Senior Administrative Analyst in OID Evaluation, conducted the interviews on behalf of the *ad hoc* committee. The interviewed faculty reported an overall positive experience with their classes, including enjoyment in working with students and high quality of graduate instructors. However, they noted that the large size of their courses was physically and mentally burdensome, and precluded meaningful interactions with most students. Surprisingly, these faculty members were unaware that their courses counted for GE credit, and were unfamiliar with the GE Governance Committee's SC GE guidelines regarding the university's expectations for courses carrying either/or social and historical analysis credit at UCLA.

Student Experience of the Society and Culture GE requirement

The average yearly enrollment in SC courses is 22,194 undergraduate students. As based in input from the Registrar's office and College Counseling, as well as from our interviews with students, there is no difficulty finding and enrolling in courses that satisfy the GE-CE requirements. The majority of students complete the SC-GE requirement during their freshman and sophomore years. However, some take these courses during their junior and senior years.

The SC committee worked with Marc Levis, Director of the Center for Educational Assessment, and John Toledo, Senior Administrative Analyst in the Office of Instructional Development's evaluation section, to evaluate the experience of students, faculty and graduate student instructors in courses that carry SC credit. These quantitative and qualitative assessments included a student "fish bowl" focus group, interviews with instructors of three large enrollment SC courses, and a brief undergraduate survey (assessing the extent to which SC GE courses were meeting SC GE guidelines, course availability, course quality, instructor engagement, acquisition of intellectual skills, student demographic information). 19,700 students were invited to participate in the online survey that ran from March 29th through April 8th. 1,839 (9.39%) responded.

Based on the survey and fishbowl focus groups, students are generally satisfied with the SC foundational area. A majority reported that the SC courses introduce them to concerns and methods of the social sciences, are well taught, and felt that their SC experience 'strengthened their critical thinking, writing, and oral communication abilities, and also made them more aware of different societies and culture'. In response to open-ended questions on the survey, students reported satisfaction with course content of SC courses and with instructors and TAs. However, students also noted dissatisfaction with high workload and very large courses. See Appendix E for greater detail and results.

The Review Committee observed the same sentiment in meetings with students. All students expressed high satisfaction with the program and with the wide breadth of available courses. A few students noted that the GE courses gave them the 'opportunity to explore courses and disciplines I otherwise would not have'. Another student said: 'What sticks with me (about the SC GE requirement) is a different way of thinking about the things I'm exposed to in the world, our system versus other systems in the world. How I became more of a thinker, especially when I had really passionate teachers.' Unfortunately, all students also noted that none of their

professors discussed the goals and purpose of the GE requirement in their courses and that from the beginning of their education at UCLA, GE requirements were ‘described as something to get through,’ that were ‘never sold as important’.

3. Goal and Plans for the Program

Two primary themes emerged from our discussions with senior administrators and faculty about the direction of the Society and Culture GE requirement. First, there is awareness that some faculty who teach GE courses are unaware that they are teaching GE courses. The 2008-2009 self-report and UgC Review raised the issue that ‘institutional amnesia may have eroded “GE-awareness” in some of the courses certified as fulfilling SC requirements at the time of the 2002 GE reform”. Although not mentioned in the 2016-2017 self-report, the current review team observed the same issue and it was noted by several faculty members, all of whom expressed an interest in addressing it. This sentiment aligns with the interviews commissioned by the SC *ad-hoc* committee and conducted by John Toledo from OID, in ‘each faculty member said that they were unfamiliar with the SC GE guidelines and the expectations of the SC GE Ad Hoc Committee. However, they expressed enthusiasm in being part of the larger mission in improving SC GE courses.’ (Appendix E). In discussions with Professor McClendon, she agreed that greater awareness by faculty of their course’s fulfillment of the GE requirement is important. She also aims to ensure that the current GE courses reflect news and emerging areas of knowledge germane to contemporary society.

Second, the recent approval of a Diversity Requirement, to be fulfilled by all UCLA undergraduates, will impact the SC foundation area of the GE education. It is unclear at this point which courses currently approved as fulfilling the SC requirement will overlap with the Diversity Requirement. Senior administrators the Review Team met with expressed the importance of systematically determining which new courses that have been proposed for the Diversity Requirement will also fulfill SC requirements.

4. Recommendations

The GE Society and Culture Foundation program is well-administered and serves an important function in educating UCLA undergraduates. The following recommendations identified by the Review Team are intended to maintain and enhance this level of quality. These recommendations fall under three categories: communication, scale, and help for TAs.

To the Chair of the General Education Governance Committee and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education

1. **Communication.** Teaching and learning in the GE program in Society and Culture would greatly benefit from more explicit and frequent communication between the Program and its constituents (students, faculty, department chairs, and TAs).
 - a. *Students.* Students told us they were unaware of the true “purpose and benefits of the GE curriculum”. The general narrative they gave was that GE requirements were ‘something to get out of the way’. To address this issue, we recommend introducing incoming students to the GE program more favorably and clearly.

This could be done at freshman orientation, perhaps by having faculty who teach GE courses, deliver a brief presentation on the purpose, merit and benefits of the GE program. Orientation advisors and resident advisors (RA) could also be trained to provide more comprehensive explanations of the GE program. External reviewer Weatherford provided some specific suggestions on this point in his report, including ‘try to transmit “depth” as a source of intellectual excitement, give evidence of the payoff, and explain the purpose of GE’.

- b. Faculty. One of the most surprising aspects of this review was the lack of knowledge faculty who teach GE courses had about the GE program in general and about how their particular course fit into the program more specifically. The review committee views this is an easily addressable problem and recommends three specific ways for doing so:
 - i. Establish a process to ensure that faculty who teach GE courses know that they are teaching GE courses. It is a disservice to students if their instructor is not sensitive to the impact of their teaching on the GE goals. A statement on the syllabus about the importance of GE and how the particular courses fits into those goals would help address this issue. It is worth noting that this suggestion was made in the previous Review Report from 2008-2009 but does not appear to have been implemented.
 - ii. “un-automate” the process of course approval. The process of proposing and vetting GE courses has become increasingly “automated” over time and seems to be entirely accomplished electronically. Some faculty expressed concern that when new faculty took over an established course that had received approval with a previous syllabus, the course changed significantly as to need a new round of approval to reflect changes to the syllabus. The committee agrees this is a concern that needs to be addressed. In short, greater monitoring of new course approvals and of new syllabus approval for previously- approved courses is necessary.
 - iii. Re-consider the policy of only reviewing 10% of courses every year. As related to point 2, this process, although more time-efficient, precludes examination of courses that may have changed over time.
- c. Department Chairs. Perhaps the most significant innovation in the UCLA GE Program is to shift governance of the undergraduate curriculum from the exclusive province of academic departments toward shared authority (with the GE Governance Committee) over GE requirements and courses. But, as our interviews with faculty revealed, the department is still the ultimate arbiter of whether a faculty member (and which faculty member) will offer a GE course. As the GE Program has evolved and become a taken- for-granted part of the furniture of the campus, the potential for Department Chairs not only to support teaching in the Program but to nurture innovative offerings seems to have declined. We learned that financial compensation to departments for “release to GE Program” has not kept pace with costs, and increasing the monetary payoff would be one way to address this. But two additional routes are worth considering.
 - i. Focusing on communication suggests meeting with chairs (not inquiring by way to an email blast), especially of departments where new faculty will be teaching GE courses.

- ii. Work with the Academic Senate’s personnel review staff and with Deans, to make sure the personnel review process recognizes and rewards teaching in the GE Program.
2. **Scale.** Some of the courses in the SC GE program are extremely large. We recognize that this is unavoidable. However, we offer suggestions for how to foster the opportunity for discussion among small groups despite class size.
- a. Require sections for all lecture classes, and cap enrollment at 20 in each section.
 - b. Provide training for TAs to structure the sections to encourage discussions and not to simply be “mini-lectures” that restate the week’s lecture.
 - c. Encourage faculty to open up lectures to class participations.
 - d. Incentivize the creation of new courses, e.g. “theme” courses, new clusters, or courses that translate contemporary research and/or methods.
3. **TAs need more support.** The review committee met with five TAs, 2 of whom reported a very positive experience TAing GE courses and 3 of whom expressed being frustrated, overworked and in need of more training. The specific complaints centered around managing such large courses, dealing with “horrible undergraduate writing” that precludes providing timely and in- depth feedback to students, and poor communication with the professor teaching the course. To this end, we make the following recommendations.
- a. Time, to devote more attention to individual students: cap GE sections at 20.
 - b. Enhanced TA training, especially with regard to student writing. TAs we interviewed were eager to learn how to improve assignments to build students’ writing capacity, how to do more diagnostic grading of writing, and then how to discuss writing problems to improve rather than discourage students who enter with weak writing skills.
 - c. Enhanced TA training, with regard to discussion. The “fish bowl” focus group and our interviews with undergraduates “underscored... the importance of small discussion sections in which [students] could engage with their TAs [and their peers in the class] in critical conversations about the material covered in lectures and readings (Report, p. 18). The TAs we talked with shared the intuition that, ideally, discussion in GE courses would be closer to the ideal, and that this entailed the TA stimulating probing conversations, and establishing and maintaining an environment for civil discussion – especially when S & C topics are often unavoidably controversial. But TAs did not feel that their preparation for teaching had equipped them as well as it should have.
 - d. We received little information about TA training, but it appears to vary widely across departments. Moving toward a more uniform approach could address a portion of the shortfall, but equipping TAs to teach writing would entail additional training. (Consultation with the union and labor relations should probably accompany this step.)
 - e. TAs seemed particularly keen on receiving more pedagogical training from individual faculty members. They reported being “hungry for mentoring”. Some faculty we interviewed also noted that they viewed TAing a GE course as ‘an internship in teaching’.

The recommendations issued will, of course, require institutional support, but will greatly enhance the experience of both students and TAs in the GE courses.

- 4. Diversity.** UCLA students, faculty and administration deserve credit for the recently-enacted Diversity Requirement: it resulted from a long and thorough discussion, and it has advanced the issue beyond the ambiguous state that confronted the 2008-09 Review Team. Given this history, we do not presume to add any original ideas. External reviewer Rutherford's report, however, made an important point to Vice Chancellor Kang during the exit meeting: 'I believe it is preferable to integrate learning about diversity (and the mechanics of fulfilling the Diversity Requirement) into the GE curriculum, rather than setting up a separate suite of courses devoted to implementing the Requirement'.

From the student survey: First, required readings and texts could be lessened and more relevant to the course topic. Participants expressed the need for course material and concepts to relate and be more relevant to modern-day society, current issues, regional cultures, and personal lives. Requests included non-Western cultures/societies and minority communities. Participants agreed that it would be helpful if GE courses provided detailed course descriptions and sample syllabi in order for students to be more informed about their choices. It was emphasized that entering students should be made aware of the purpose and added value of GEs, especially during orientation, and that students be provided guidance in choosing their GE courses with consideration of each individual's strengths and weaknesses.

Final Recommendation.

The Undergraduate Council recommends that the next review be scheduled on a regular eight-year cycle in AY 2024-25, pending a satisfactory progress review report.

Respectfully Submitted,

Adriana Galvan (Psychology), Undergraduate Council (Review Team Chair)

Sule Ozler (Economics), Undergraduate Council

Appendix I: External Reviewer Reports

Stephen Weatherford, UC Santa Barbara, Political Science
Steven Dandaneau, Kansas State University, Undergraduate Studies



DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

SANTA BARBARA, CALIFORNIA 93106-9420
(805) 893-3431, Department
(805) 893-3309, FAX

January 14, 2017

To: UCLA Academic Senate Program Review
General Education: Foundations of Society and Culture
c/o Na Shin, Administrative Assistant, UCLA Academic Senate

From: Stephen Weatherford
Professor of Political Science and Associate Dean of Social Sciences, UCSB

Re: External Reviewer's report

The comments below benefited from the Self-Review Report of the General Education Governance Committee's Ad Hoc Review Committee, including its very useful Appendices, along with response memos from Patricia Turner, Dean and Provost of Undergraduate Education and from Catia Sternini, Chair of the Committee on Diversity and Equal Opportunity; and two documents from the 2008-09 Review, Joseph Manson's report of the Review Team Chair and Michael Schudson's External Reviewer Report. With this written material in hand, the Review Team (Adriana Galvan, Chair, Sule Ozler, Steven Dandaneau, and myself) convened for a dinner meeting on January 8 and spent the next day interviewing administrators, faculty, graduate and undergraduate students associated with the GE Society and Culture Program. Although any brief visit inevitably offers only a partial view, I want to thank the Undergraduate Council and the Academic Senate for sharing the background information and setting up a wide-ranging and stimulating series of interviews.

Before turning to specific issues for this review, it is important to recognize the quality and innovativeness of the UCLA General Education Program. Now nearly twenty years old, the program, distinguished alike by intellectual inventiveness and administrative courage, remains an exemplar. Unusual enough in embracing the idea that the goal of liberal learning could be implemented in a large public university, the UCLA GE Program went on to create the cluster program and to engage faculty from disciplinary departments and professional schools in offering several hundred courses in three areas of knowledge, Arts and Humanities, Scientific Inquiry, and (the object of this review) Society and Culture. Creating and maintaining this project required exceptional administration, necessitating that the governing body tasked with ensuring interdisciplinary breadth and intellectual coherence would exercise its authority with the lightness appropriate to a scholarly community. My overall impression is that the Program is well-administered, and that UCLA's leaders, via staffing and funding, continue to signal their appreciation for the fact that an exceptional program requires more support. Program Chair Muriel McClendon and Dean Patricia Turner carry forward this tradition of talented administrators, and we appreciated their insights into the program, its constraints and opportunities.

But 20 years since the founding is a long time. Institutional innovations evolve, and the excitement of revolution must give way to regular procedures. The trick is to create a bureaucracy that keeps the core from going stale and nurtures a new generation of innovators infused with enough iconoclasm to continually revivify the content and challenge outdated processes. This is the sort of institutional environment in which the Review Team undertook its assignment of constructive criticism.

The Review Team's comments and suggestions, as Professor Galvan explained in our closing meeting, fell into three categories: communication, scale, and help for TAs. We also inquired about diversity, in response to a specific suggestion from CODEO, and aware that the topic had figured in discussions of the GE Program since at least 2002 and had been given new prominence by the 2015 enactment of a Diversity Requirement.

Communication.

The notion of communication is broad and was chosen intentionally; this category will touch on comments and suggestions elaborated under the other categories. Teaching and learning in the GE Program in Society and Culture would benefit from more carefully-crafted messages, and more open and regular exchanges, between the Program and its constituents (students, faculty, TAs, and department chairs) and among producers and consumers (faculty, TAs, and students). In the sections below, I briefly summarize the evidence that change is needed, then suggest actions that might address these criticisms.

- With potential students. Both Program administrators and undergrads who had taken GE classes suggested that information was lacking. For potential students, the literature sent out before enrollment and the oral and written communication at Orientation are obvious sites for potential improvement; but campus advisors, whose biases and incomplete information can skew the choices of first-year students, are also key. For students, the communication needs to serve three purposes:
 - Give a sense of the breadth and depth of GE courses. A census of course offerings might be impractical, but students told us they did not realize how broad the selection was. Students and faculty appreciated that GE courses are not superficial surveys but bring students into the topic in a sophisticated and analytical way – try to transmit “depth” as a source of intellectual excitement.
 - Explain the purpose of GE: why do trusted sources as august as UCLA and the faculty believe GE would be good for you?
 - Give evidence of the payoff – in intellectual perspective and in professional preparation. Faculty told us some of these stories, but current students endorsed their GE courses for (the same and other) persuasive reasons.
- With faculty. We were surprised to learn that at least some instructors were unaware that their courses were included in the GE Program. This was, however, a small, if embarrassing, communication shortfall in what should be a regular, reciprocal conversation.
 - Proposing and vetting. The process of proposing and vetting GE courses was at one time the occasion for direct, personal (often face-to-face) interaction about course content, interdisciplinary connections, and implications for “big questions.” This process has now been “automated,” and seems to be entirely

accomplished at one remove from human interaction. We heard concerns from faculty, where new faculty taking over an established course received the old syllabus but very little mentoring, and where seasoned faculty wanted more interaction with colleagues who are involved with GE; and from TAs, who noted big differences in the content and pedagogy when a course was taught by different faculty.

- Course submission is via email, the vetting process seems to involve very little real-time interaction; reminders to faculty of the significance (for content and pedagogy) of being certified as a GE course are similarly indirect.
- Perhaps a move back toward the heightened personal engagement that characterized the early years of the GE curriculum would revivify faculty engagement.
- Monitoring. The monitoring process now reviews a 10% sample of courses every year.
 - Although this is probably a sound economizing move, we received no data explicitly comparing the previous review procedure to the sampling strategy. If the transition's effect on identifying problem syllabi cannot be estimated and validated, then some additional analysis is needed.¹
 - The 10% sample seems to be the only monitoring device. Our interviews suggested that it might be desirable for monitoring to be triggered (in addition) by, for instance, a change in faculty teaching the class, or new developments in the discipline that might enrich the content or the interpretation of evidence.
- Why / how teaching in GE is expected to be different. At the core of the “liberal learning” ideal is personal interaction between teacher and students. Could some ways be found to enhance this at UCLA? (Note that the cluster program is praised for succeeding at this.) Our interviews suggest two loci ripe for improving this aspect of communication.
 - Move away from once-a-week classes (with long lectures) to briefer classes meeting more often. And encourage faculty to teach a section (e.g., an Honors section) of the class. (At UCSB some of us do this for the intrinsic reward, but it might require a small measure of material compensation.)
 - Encourage faculty to integrate regular conversation – *reciprocal* exchanges – with TAs. (The course TA 375 already offers a venue for this, but it appears to be underutilized and seldom lives up to the ideal of an occasion for “working together.”)
 - Both faculty and TAs envisioned the GE program as an especially productive apprenticeship – this connotes mentoring from the faculty to the grad student. But the direction of this communication is mirrored by the TAs’ more extensive involvement with

¹ For instance, the 10% sample could be compared with syllabi not included in the initial sample (but that would have been inspected under the previous method). Questions: Is the sample as good a filter? (Does it identify about the same proportion of “problem” syllabi?) Is the sample as discerning? (Does it identify the same configuration of problems?)

individual students and with sections as forums from trying out new pedagogical approaches to the material. In the flow of regular conversations, learning could flow both ways.

- With TAs. Interviews with faculty and TAs underlined the way TA-ing in a GE course is different, and more demanding, primarily centering on the enhanced expectation for students' active discussion and writing.
 - Discussion. Every GE course should have sections, capped at 20 if possible. (TAs we talked to saw evidence of a “threshold” between 20 and 25, with inclusiveness and quality of discussion declining visibly.)
 - Writing. TAs said students' willingness and ability for scholarly writing had declined (since the TAs were undergrads). TAs seemed willing and eager to help improve their students' writing, but they have neither the training nor the time to evaluate and teach writing. Remediating this will require institutional support, perhaps by way of (i) a required writing course prior to undergrads' first GE course, (ii) more extensive TA training in teaching writing, and (iii) more time for each student (via smaller sections).
 - Make clear that TA-ing in a GE class is more than a “job,” and this entails more active and regular engagement with the faculty about pedagogy. As an apprenticeship in an unusual experiment in structuring the process of teaching and learning, both faculty and TA bear a corresponding expectation to think creatively and to try out about alternative approaches – and to discuss how they worked.
- With department chairs. Perhaps the most significant innovation in the UCLA GE Program is to shift governance of the undergraduate curriculum from the exclusive province of academic departments toward shared authority (with the GE Governance Committee) over GE requirements and courses. But, as our interviews with faculty revealed, the department is still the ultimate arbiter of whether a faculty member (and which faculty member) will offer a GE course.
 - Department Chairs must balance their concern with intellectual quality and coherence within the major against (a) scarce faculty resources and (b) the GE Program's goal of offering courses whose content is broader and more systematically interdisciplinary.
 - As the GE Program has evolved and become a taken-for-granted part of the furniture of the campus, the potential for Department Chairs not only to support teaching in the Program but to nurture innovative offerings seems to have declined.
 - We learned that financial compensation to departments for “release to GE Program” has not kept pace with costs, and increasing the monetary payoff would be one way to address this. But two additional routes are worth considering.
 - Focusing on communication suggests meeting with chairs (not inquiring by way to an email blast), especially of departments where new faculty will be teaching GE courses.
 - Work with the Academic Senate's personnel review staff and with Deans, to make sure the personnel review process recognizes and rewards teaching in the GE Program.

Scale.

The quest for how a public research university can emulate the GE experience typified by a liberal arts college is not a quixotic one, but it is a constant struggle. Nearly ten years ago, the UC Commission on General Education in the 21st C. issued a report, and its ideas are still worth considering.² Many of the challenges center on dealing with size or scale, but our interviews suggested that revisions (some quite modest) in the Program will help counteract the effects of scale.

- Some lecture classes are unavoidably large. This is an efficient way to deliver content, but it does little for the “engagement” component of liberal learning – the requirement to foster the opportunity for discussion among a small group, where the structure and organization of the section and the familiarity of repeated interaction provide a safe environment for critical and even innovative speaking, and responsive listening. A couple of ideas to strengthen this component:
 - Require sections for all lecture classes, and cap enrollment at 20 in each section.
 - Encourage (indeed, expect) faculty and TAs to organize sections as “small-scale learning environments,” not as “mini-lectures” where the TA explains the readings or lectures. (Student interviews revealed that this was often the pattern in their GE classes.)
 - Encourage faculty to open up lectures to class participation, and facilitate the possibility of faculty teaching one section of a large class.
 - Faculty might want to consider working with the TAs to make a regular practice of referring to significant discussions in last week’s sections. This would underline the value of students’ contribution via section participation, and allow faculty to highlight continuing threads in the lecture.
- Over time and institutional routinization, the vibrant sense of being “change agents” that must have infused the early years of UCLA’s GE Program has faded. Symptoms of this (using adjectives that came up in our interviews) are the “drift” of delivered course content from the long ago-approved syllabus; the impression that particular courses have gotten “stale” – either as exciting introductions to a discipline’s questions or methods, or as innovative arguments about connections among bodies of knowledge; and the “amnesia” about the significance and expectations engendered by the fact that a course is certified as part of the GE curriculum.
 - Revising and/or creating a paragraph explaining GE objectives and how these are expected to play out in this particular course – as a statement in the syllabus and –crucially – a first-lecture topic for discussion in class. (Two of the faculty we interviewed emphasized that they orchestrate a discussion of “GE and what it means” at the first class meeting, to good effect.) This would cue students’ expectations and heighten the salience of the learning process.
 - The revisions proposed above to the processes for vetting and monitoring courses would serve the same ends.
- Encourage the creation of new courses, e.g. “theme” courses, new clusters, or courses that translate new research and/or methods into the undergraduate curriculum.

² *General Education in the 21st Century, A Report of the University of California Commission on General Education in the 21st Century* (Berkeley, CA: Center for Studies in Higher Education, 2007). The Commission was headed by Neil Smelser and Michael Schudson; I was a member.

- The danger with the multiplication of courses is that the intended coherence of content and pedagogy that gave the Program some of the strengths of a “core” will unintentionally metamorphose into a cafeteria. Our interview with Dean Turner gives us confidence that this peril is being monitored.

TAs are ‘impacted’ and need support.

In talking with faculty and TAs, we were impressed with the consensus that succeeding at the goal of creating the special GE learning environment for students depends crucially on TAs. GE courses (should) make exceptional demands on graduate student TAs, and it would be short-sighted of the GE Program not to enumerate the resources needed to meet these demands and try hard to supply them. Resources include:

- Time, to devote more attention to individual students: cap GE sections at 20.
- Enhanced TA training, especially with regard to student writing. TAs we interviewed were eager to learn how to improve assignments to build students’ writing capacity, how to do more diagnostic grading of writing, and then how to discuss writing problems to improve rather than discourage students who enter with weak writing skills.
- Enhanced TA training, with regard to discussion. The “fish bowl” focus group and our interviews with undergraduates “underscored... the importance of small discussion sections in which [students] could engage with their TAs [and their peers in the class] in critical conversations about the material covered in lectures and readings (*Report*, p. 18). The TAs we talked with shared the intuition that, ideally, discussion in GE courses would be closer to the ideal, and that this entailed the TA stimulating probing conversations, and establishing and maintaining an environment for civil discussion – especially when S & C topics are often unavoidably controversial. But TAs did not feel that their preparation for teaching had equipped them as well as it should have.
- We received little information about TA training, but it appears to vary widely across departments. Moving toward a more uniform approach could address a portion of the shortfall, but equipping TAs to teach writing would entail additional training. (Consultation with the union and labor relations should probably accompany this step.)

The conception of GE courses as exceptional and purposefully-structured “learning environments” ensures that the notion of “support for TAs” ramifies out toward actions that would further develop the potential for collaborative work between the faculty member and her/his TAs. Faculty we interviewed, especially the more “seasoned,” with long experience teaching both non-GE and GE classes, emphasized that TA-ing a GE course is “an internship in teaching” and that TAs are “hungry for mentoring.” Above, I have suggested several ideas to deepen the co-involvement of faculty and TAs in the process, and – by heightening the attention to pedagogy by the whole “teaching corps” – these would build the capacity of faculty and TAs alike.

Diversity.

UCLA students, faculty and administration deserve credit for the recently-enacted Diversity Requirement: it resulted from a long and thorough discussion, and it has advanced the issue beyond the ambiguous state that confronted the 2008-09 Review Team. Given this history, we do not presume to add any original ideas. But I do want to underline the response I made to Professor Kang in our exit meeting. I believe it is preferable to integrate learning about diversity

(and the mechanics of fulfilling the Diversity Requirement) into the GE curriculum, rather than setting up a separate suite of courses devoted to implementing the Requirement. Moreover, GE courses, and especially courses in the S&C area, offer rich opportunities for integrating the themes and goals of the Diversity Requirement: the essential – indeed, defining – orientation of S&C courses is discerning and interrogating difference, learning to compare systematically and fairly, articulating one’s interpretation in terms whose logic and evidence are clear, and striving to understand the perspectives of others. To conclude with a strong formulation of the case for integration, we need look no further than the Ad Hoc Committee’s *Report* (e.g., p. 4), where the nuanced discussion of diversity runs a continuous thread through the history of GE courses in the Foundation of Society and Culture.

Summary of Recommendations.

I have suggested a number of actions in this report; their implementation (assuming approval) might be arrayed in three categories.

- Immediate / short-term: improve information and communication going to potential students about the GE Program; humanize (via more face-to-face communication) the process of vetting and monitoring courses, and opportunities for substantive conversation between faculty teaching in the Program and governance committees with their wider perspective; encourage more continuous communication about pedagogy between faculty and TAs in each course.
- Medium-term: cap section size at 20; develop more robust TA training, both for leading discussion and for teaching writing.
- Long-term: assure that all students are competent writers before their first GE course.

Date: 20 January 2017

Memorandum

To: UCLA Academic Senate Program Review, c/o Na Shin, Administrative Assistant

From: Steven P. Dandaneau, Ph.D., Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies, Kansas State University

Re: External Review: GE Foundations of Society and Culture

I. Introductory Remarks

This report is grounded in various UCLA materials provided to the Review Team—not least of which is the “Self-Review Report on the General Education Curriculum: Foundations of Society and Culture” (June 2016). It is also based on what I learned during a January 8-9, 2017, site visit, where I joined UCLA faculty members, Adriana Galvan and Sule Ozler, and fellow external reviewer, Stephen Weatherford of the University of California, Santa Barbara, in interviewing select administrators, faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and undergraduate students concerning their respective experience with, and perspective on, GE Foundations of Society and Culture. I have also reviewed information available at pertinent websites.

UCLA states that General Education (GE) courses are offered to “introduce students to the fundamental ideas and intellectual activities that scholars across campus—in the arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences—draw on in their work” (<http://www.registrar.ucla.edu/Academics/GE-Requirement>). “Courses in the GE curriculum,” UCLA continues, “offer diverse perspectives on how human beings think and feel, solve problems, express ideas, and create and discover new knowledge.” Underscoring UCLA’s integration of GE and basic skills training, the text continues: “These courses also help students acquire the skills essential to university-level learning: they challenge students to assess information critically; frame and deliver reasoned and persuasive arguments orally and in writing; and identify, acquire, and use the knowledge necessary to solve problems.” In sum: “GE is the *foundation* of a *UCLA education*” (emphasis added), implying that, together, the three GE areas offer the basis for a singular education.

Our focus here, however, is solely Foundations of Society and Culture, in which the nearly 300 currently approved courses are meant to “introduce students to the ways in which humans organize, structure, rationalize, and govern their diverse societies and cultures over time” (ibid). Grouped into Historical and Social Analysis sub-categories from each of which students must successfully complete at least one course, Foundations of Society and Culture courses, as UCLA further explains, “focus on a particular historical question, societal problem, or topic of political and economic concern in an effort to demonstrate how issues are objectified for study, how data is collected and analyzed, and how new understandings of social phenomena are achieved and evaluated.” Together, these statements reflect UCLA’s publicly available understanding of General Education and more specifically one of its three component areas; they are formal communication to prospective and current faculty and students alike.

As presented, UCLA’s definition and approach to the delivery of “GE” lie roughly in the middle of various pertinent long-standing discursive and institutional continua. Neither “core” nor “cafeteria” (to use the helpful terminology offered by my evaluation team colleague, Dr. Weatherford), UCLA’s focus only on *three* areas of general learning lies much closer to a unified, explicit, or “core” understanding of general

education (e.g., ‘what all “educated” people need to know’), than is in place at many universities, my own included. In contrast, the sheer number of GE-approved courses, including the number approved *within* Foundations of Society and Culture, reflects an already significant and probably growing diversity of regularly available approaches for the fulfillment of university GE Foundations of Society and Culture goals. As became clear from interviews with faculty, TAs, and students, this diversity of course material and pedagogies is further extended by individual faculty and even by TAs--for the same course as well as with respect to courses and course sections taught concurrently—who are typically and variously free to fulfill their instructional obligations in independent and, in practice, often idiosyncratic ways. From the point of view of undergraduate students, then, this results in an abundance of *choice*--both manifest and *latent*, in that the considerable variation which is course-, instructor-, and TA section-specific is not captured by formal public statements nor necessarily explicitly publicized—where choice is the hallmark of the “cafeteria” approach to General Education. This quality also reflects the complexity of the academy, not to mention the modern societies and cultures which nurture and support its perpetual differentiation.

II. Principal Findings

At the conclusion of the site visit, the Review Team (Galvan, Chair; Ozler, Weatherford, and I) arrived at a tentative consensus. I agree with my colleagues, for example, that the UCLA administrators, faculty, staff, and students with whom we interacted evinced an admirable passion for General Education as well as impressive expertise and judgment concerning GE students, course design, pedagogy, and the administration of General Education as a complex higher education program which demands trade-offs between competing goods. I was personally particularly impressed by the faculty instructors and graduate teaching assistants, whose many and various efforts to provide a rigorous, integrated, and at times quite distinctive GE experience corresponded to my elevated expectations for such. Prosaically, UCLA’s faculty care, they bring strong academic chops to bear in their work, and the results are sound.

It is also the case, however, that California’s on-going budget woes--and their adverse effect on UC System and UCLA funding—has had an evidently direct and unfortunate consequence for GE Foundations of Society and Culture. First-year students who do not avail themselves of the counter-veiling Freshman Cluster Program or who are otherwise fulfilling GE requirements beyond the Cluster Program, find themselves, testimony reflects and data supports, very often in GE courses enrolling 200, 300, and more students and that are supported by perhaps often-overworked and sometimes simply overwhelmed TAs.

The graduate teaching assistants who were interviewed—5 in total—expressed a range of thoughts and feelings about their work. One, a UCLA alumnus, worried that the institution was “riding on fumes—we’re pumping out people...it’s honestly kind of embarrassing that they’re receiving a UCLA degree.” This same TA felt that “we (TAs) should be *eliminated*” in favor of instruction exclusively provided by UCLA’s esteemed ladder faculty. This relatively critical point of view was, however, partially balanced by TAs who spoke of their “love for GE” and who were mindful that much of what is taught specifically in Foundations of Society and Culture is a “revelation” for students which can “inspire a way of thinking about education” that includes “unlearning” limiting and distorting yet prevalent myths and ideologies.

Teaching assistants offered numerous ideas for the improvement of Foundations of Society and Culture. These included, not unexpectedly, lower TA-to-student ratios, but also additional support for the improvement of undergraduate student writing acumen (which TAs tended to judge harshly), a reduction in overarching GE themes and goals (in part, because there “just isn’t enough time” to cover typical course material), additional communication and coordination between TAs and their faculty leaders (including perhaps more than one standard weekly meeting, the apparent UCLA norm), additional

communication and coordination among TAs themselves (including between experienced TAs and neophytes as well as between TAs providing instruction for the same course but in distinct sections). One TA was adamant that the most effective reform would be elimination of the so-called “18-quarter rule” (<https://grad.ucla.edu/gss/appm/aapmanual.pdf>), which limits TAs’ tours of duty fighting the good fight on GE’s instructional front lines but which also, according to this TA, eliminates key experienced hands.

Having repeated the phrase “communication and coordination,” I would be remiss were I not to doubly underscore the importance attached to both by me and my Review Team colleagues. Here I might turn to the input we received from the 8 members of the faculty with whom we were delighted to converse. It would appear that it is uncommon, if not truly rare, for faculty to receive input regarding their GE Foundations of Society and Culture syllabi. Likewise, faculty seem aware of the relatively new “Diversity Requirement”—e-mails have been sent and read—but even those who are self-assured concerning their courses’ appropriateness for inclusion among approved Diversity Requirement course work have not taken steps to explore proper procedures for receiving this recognition. They are unsure what to do, whether the requirement is as yet in effect, or, if not, when it will be. Faculty also expressed an interest in “borrowing/stealing” good ideas from other faculty, but were not aware of any convenient, general medium for such sharing. Others who were fortunate to be ensconced in relatively specialized and more tight-knit units seemed better able to benefit from intra-unit faculty exchanges and joint exploration and learning. Faculty repeatedly expressed a desire to know “what others are doing,” although they also largely took for granted their cherished independence and unquestioned prerogatives in the classroom.

The undergraduates with whom we spoke—3 in total—used a language common to students across the country and seemingly through the ages. Here the Review Team heard about GE requirements (as opposed to “upper divs”) which needed be “knocked out,” “gotten rid of,” or at least “gotten out of the way.” These same students, however, generally “liked” their “GEs,” and often received from them “more than was expected.” Even though one faculty member stressed that she always explained the meaning of General Education to her students (including that GE does not stand for “generally easy”), the students with whom we spoke, in contrast, typically reported vague and competing understandings of GE as well as highly various experiences with GE academic rigor. For some, it’s all about “trying to find the easiest” GE course as part of a de facto “checking the box” process. For another, their GE TAs have stressed “memorize these things and you’ll be fine.” One student noted: “we go to a public university” and General Education at such should permit one to “grow as a person.” The obviously talented undergraduates with whom we spoke were using service-learning, double majors, and student government leadership to do so.

To summarize, the Review Team (and I fully subscribe to this viewpoint) identified a) communication and coordination, b) scale and variability, and various issues experienced by c) GE-assigned teaching assistants, as three key areas of concern. Because these issue areas are, like mixed student attitudes toward General Education, endemic to U.S. higher education, the Review Team was not surprised to discover them. Indeed, many of these same issues are evident from study of the 2008-2009 Foundations of Society and Culture program review, which was included in the UCLA-provided dossier. For example, Michael Schudson’s 2009 external review pointed with concern to the non-participation of the Department of Economics in UCLA’s GE offerings, which is a situation as yet rectified eight years later. The current Review Team, for its part, noted that its own chair’s department, Psychology, is also non-participating. As with Economics, Psychology’s nonparticipation is explained as the ironic result of overwhelming student demand for its introductory courses. Taking the students’ point of view, however, how could UCLA reasonably contend that the study of economics and psychology are not critical for General Education, or, more to the point, not absolutely essential for Foundations of Society and Culture?

III. Recommendations

The Review Team's site visit coincided with stories in *The Chronicle of Education* and *Inside Higher Ed* announcing that the University of Southern California had hired Shaun Harper from the University of Pennsylvania to bring his noted Center on Race and Equity to Los Angeles. This represents one strategy for beefing-up study of diversity/inclusion and the Foundations of Society and Culture in general: recruit star faculty, establish vibrant centers for research and teaching, and etc. January 9, 2017, also welcomed a sonorous labor action on UCLA's campus, the strikers surrounding Murphy Hall, among other things, signaling the severity of financial constraints with which public higher education in California, and nationwide, must contend. Mindful of this latter situation as well as the frustration it often brings—and this, especially so for the most committed and idealistic academic leaders—I offer recommended actions, the implementation of which might reasonably be expected to bear little or no cost. I am also mindful that my basis of information is quite thin in comparison to the extensive, in-depth knowledge and experience which UCLA's GE Foundations of Society and Culture administrators bring to analysis of their program. Stipulations of this sort notwithstanding, I reiterate that my perspective jibes with a rough Review Team consensus, and that from this there is perhaps greater reason to weigh our similar recommendations.

I enumerate my recommendations, beginning with the most important:

1. An administrator speculated that TAs are probably the “critical lynchpin” of GE Foundations of Society and Culture. Given UCLA's financially strained environment, this assessment seems more than plausible. Therefore, I propose several steps which might bolster the critical role which graduate teaching assistants play in providing UCLA undergraduate students with high-quality basic instruction in the human sciences:
 - a. UCLA might consider permitting ad hoc exceptions to the “18-quarter rule.” This might entail creating a process which empowers the Vice Provost and Dean for Undergraduate Education to receive recommendations and, through consultation with relevant department and college leaders, render ad hoc decisions which fairly balance graduate student *and* undergraduate student needs.
 - b. We learned from one long-serving instructor who was himself a UCLA alumnus that “375 courses” were once “internships in teaching,” where graduate teaching assistants were “hungry for mentoring” and where weekly meetings schedules permitted three-hours of interaction between faculty and TAs. Today's 375 experiences are much more various but never, it seems, require more than one hour of anyone's time. Even evidently highly committed and creative faculty breezily dismissed the thought of expending more than one hour per week teaching, as it were, TAs to teach. I recommend that UCLA reexamine 375 course requirements. If TAs are the critical lynchpin of General Education, then the University has an obligation to prepare these apprentice instructors in a coherent and consistent manner. The obvious win/win is that the graduate students also benefit.
 - c. As with faculty, TAs want to learn from each other, within units and departments, but also across them. GE Foundations of Society and Culture might regularly convene TAs (and faculty) for professional development experiences, including expert speakers from within and outside of the university, informal brown bag luncheons which promote candid discussion, and other fora which facilitate interaction with teaching/learning experts (e.g., “Best Practices for Leading Discussion,” “Efficient Ways to Improve Student Writing”), as well as interaction between relatively less and more experienced TAs from disciplines within and outside of Foundations of Society and Culture. TAs need to feel part of a valued, respected, and supported community of fellow teaching assistants.
 - d. It was surprising how often TAs (as well as faculty) asked for regular e-mail communication from GE administration central, which I understood as a desire for *more coordination*, alas not dictated but nurtured centrally. Ironically, it is as though many faculty feel “anomic,” that is, as Émile Durkheim diagnosed it over one-hundred years ago, disturbed by insufficient normative “regulation” or guidance, which Durkheim identified as a distinctively modern social problem.

- e. Finally, and more basically still, I suggest that department administrators be held responsible for assuring that every GE Foundations of Society and Culture syllabus include indication of the course's status as a GE Foundation of Society and Culture course. Furthermore, perhaps at department meetings or other appropriate gatherings, faculty should be reminded that it is a best practice as well as an expectation of the University that they speak to UCLA's General Education philosophy and approach at the outset of GE Foundations of Society and Culture course meetings.
2. If it were not for the role played by TAs, then one would think that faculty would serve as the critical lynchpin of GE Foundations of Society and Culture. Given that UCLA faculty are more and more offering GE course work in large-enrollment formats, I recommend that UCLA offer its GE faculty regular and intentional opportunities for professional development in emergent large-enrollment pedagogy best practices. Just in physics, for example, renowned leaders like Wieman, McDermott, and Mazur have made it possible for large-enrollment courses to produce exceptional learning outcomes. Likewise, they have made it difficult, given the robust basis in research on which their pedagogical innovations stand, to tolerate anything less. Many of these techniques are available for use in the human sciences. From undergraduate teaching assistants to use of clickers to in-class and online discussion and peer-evaluation techniques, and beyond, there is no reason, in my view, that UCLA should not be at the fore of the very highest quality large-enrollment instruction. The "just memorize" situation intimated earlier should be verboten at UCLA.
3. A third, and often overlooked, vital constituency are academic advisors. The Review Team learned, for example, that "NSAs" (New Student Advisors) play a significant role in either encouraging or discouraging pursuit of one or another course through General Education. One student specifically noted that her NSA discouraged her from enrolling in a Cluster, while others noted, for example, that they had been encouraged to view the year-long commitment to a Cluster as a risk too great to take ("stuck in it for the year"). Students described advising as an "it's up to you" proposition; one poignantly noted that "I don't know if I'm on track." I recommend that UCLA consider a thorough review of its academic advising policies and procedures. Are NSA's and other advisors properly educated about the purposes and opportunities available through GE and Foundations of Society and Culture in particular? My Kansas State University colleague, Dr. Charlie Nutt, Executive Director of NACADA: The Global Community for Academic Advising (<https://www.nacada.ksu.edu/>), which boasts over 14,000 members worldwide, is one possible resource.
4. Central academic management of General Education is notoriously difficult. It seems that the most forward-looking, innovative educational ambitions often run a shoal of narrowly perceived departmental and faculty self-interest. There is probably not a research university in the U.S. which does not bemoan the pernicious effects of academic "silos" and seek ways to effectively bridge if not eliminate them entirely. In this regard, I recommend that UCLA consider partnering with its Student Government leadership to promote a "student-centered" review of GE and, in particular, GE Foundations of Society and Culture. The student perspective more readily brings to light, I would suggest, the potentially life-altering import of General Education and, in particular, general education in matters social and cultural. This might help communicate to faculty and TA instructors concerning the nature of the people as well as the stakes involved in this aspect of their work. It also more easily reveals what needs doing to improve student attitudes toward, and responsiveness to, GE instruction. Simply, it would seem that UCLA would benefit from study of GE at the student experience grassroots, using perhaps ethnographic and peer-led research methods to complement the "fishbowl" and other types of assessment methods already employed. What actually, after all, are students learning from participation in GE Foundations of Society and Culture? Does this accumulated learning approximate UCLA's lofty goals in this area? How long-lasting is this learning?
5. As the author once of a lead article in *Teaching Sociology* entitled, "Sisyphus Had It Easy," I have long appreciated how challenging it is to successfully provide instruction in social and cultural science basics, even to especially talented university students. Already socialized and enculturated—already possessed of socially constructed selves, already taking for granted historically and spatially specific political and economic systems, family institutions and roles, and a welter of similar foundational beliefs and practices—


it may be that the level of “elementary” instruction in this area is in fact the most challenging level to address. As one TA noted, “unlearning” is required, and initial unlearning is often the most fraught process. One especially long-serving GE Foundations of Society and Culture faculty member spoke of “making the familiar strange and the strange familiar,” no easy task, while another seasoned instructor repeated how careful he is lecture to avoid even the appearance of partisan bias, intimating the deep and potentially disruptive tensions which can and do appear regularly in social and cultural science course work, and underscoring that these tensions have been of late quite pronounced. Another TA shared, however, that “some of my strongest students are from South Campus,” suggesting that required “unlearning” often works just as well for students whose primary interests run more in the direction of positivist philosophies of science, an outcome which has been long recognized as a key GE success, to render meaningful that for which students, given their specialization, are apt to only have fleeting curricular acquaintance. In this area, then, I recommend that UCLA leaders—including senior-most leaders--more often and more forthrightly give public expression to their support of GE Foundations of Society and Culture’s purposes and programs. By shining a light on the faculty, TAs, and students who, in this area particularly, are dedicated to almost Sisyphean struggle with some of the most inherently personally challenging material with which one is likely to struggle in formal university instruction, leaders provide support to those especially in need of visible and authoritative recognition. It costs nothing to speak on behalf of often courageous (un)learning.

IV. Summary

If I were asked to distill my assessment of GE Foundations of Society and Culture, perhaps radically in the form of a letter grade, I would hesitate because UCLA’s size and complexity resists such simplistic representations. It is also true that most of UCLA’s issues, such as they are, are commonplace and unsurprising. Indeed, their origins are often rooted in factors largely beyond the control of proximate administrators. Still, if pressed, I would offer a B+; that is, UCLA’s GE Foundations of Society and Culture program is, in my judgment, *very good*. I think “very good” mainly because the evident quality of the faculty, TAs, and students—particularly their passion and concern combined with their equally admirable academic abilities—make UCLA’s “GE” more than merely good or solid, but, rather, a cut above that which is typical at large U.S. research I universities. The Cluster Program, for example, about which relatively little has been stated in this assessment, appears to offer a very large number of first-year students a relatively integrated, coherent, and often innovative GE experience. Even a recent UCLA history alumnus with whom the Review Team interacted by chance meeting at our pre-site visit dinner, raved about his “Biotechnology and Society” Freshman Cluster, especially its third quarter, which, for him, involved creative interdisciplinary research and learning. This cluster made an impression on him, while his voluntary and excited informal testimony made an impression on me and my Review Team colleagues.

Evidence of enthusiasm notwithstanding, I believe that UCLA has room to develop in this area. Situated in one of the world’s most culturally diverse environments and serving undergraduates who are among the finest that world has to offer, UCLA cannot countenance a General Education “foundation” in which the vital rudiments of society and culture are given short-shrift in any way. My recommendations (and those of my Review Team colleagues), are meant to help secure UCLA’s reputation as a topmost public research university for undergraduate students. Given its superb leadership, I am optimistic for UCLA’s future.

Sincerely,



Steven P. Dandaneau, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies

Appendix II: Site Visit Schedule

UCLA Academic Senate Program Review
General Education: Foundations of Society & Culture

Site Visit Date: January 9, 2017

Review Team Members:

Adriana Galvan, Review Team Chair, Undergraduate Council, Psychology
Sule Ozler, Undergraduate Council, Economics
Steven Dandaneau, Kansas State University, Undergraduate Studies
Stephen Weatherford, University of California, Santa Barbara, Political Science

Morning meetings from 8:00am-12:00pm will be held in [Murphy 3135](#)

Afternoon meetings from 1:30pm-4:00pm will be held in [Murphy 2325](#)

The Exit Meeting from 4:00-5:00pm will be held in [Murphy 2121](#).

January 8, 2017:

7:00pm Dinner meeting: Initial organizational session for review team members only
(Luskin Conference Center- Plateia, 425 Westwood Plaza, Los Angeles, CA 90095; 310-794-3563)

January 9, 2017:

8:00am Breakfast with Program Chair **Muriel McClendon**

9:00am Meeting with Dean **Patricia Turner**

10:00am Meetings with representative groups of faculty who have taught courses in the Foundations of Society and Culture

- **Lauren Duquette** | Assistant Professor, Sociology
- **Jason Throop** | Professor & Vice Chair, Anthropology
- **Aaron Burke** | Associate Professor, Near Eastern Languages and Cultures
- **Lily Welty** | Lecturer, Asian American Studies
- **Michael Suman** | Lecturer, Communication Studies
- **Jeff Prager** | Professor, Sociology
- **Hannah Landecker** | Professor, Sociology
- **John Langdon** | Adjunct Professor, History
- **Steven Nelson** | Professor, Art History
- **Chris Tausanovitch** | Acting Assistant Professor, Political Science

12:00pm Lunch – review team members only
(UCLA Faculty Center)

1:30pm Meetings with representative undergraduate students who have taken courses in the Foundations of Society and Culture

- **Taylor Lee** | 3rd year majoring in Math Econ
- **Miranda Baker** | 3rd year double majoring in Political Science and History
- **3rd Student TBA**

UCLA Academic Senate Program Review
General Education: Foundations of Society & Culture

2:30pm Meetings with graduate students who have taught courses in the Foundations of Society and Culture

- **Edon Cohanim** | TA for COMM ST 10
- **Kathryn Wainfan** | TA for POL SCI 50
- **Erica Duncan** | TA for HIST 12A
- **Tiffany Lytle** | TA for ASIA AM 20
- **Megan Baker** | TA for AM IND M10/WL ARTS M23
- **Bianca Beauchemin** | TA for GENDER 10
- **Michael Rocchio** | TA for ARCH&UD 10B & CLASSIC 10
- **Joseph Perry** | TA for POL SCI 20

3:30pm Closed session for review team only/ Meeting with Program Chair **Muriel McClendon**

4:00pm EXIT MEETING (2121 Murphy Hall)

- **Muriel McClendon**, Program Chair
- **Scott Waugh**, Executive Vice Chancellor & Provost
- **Patricia Turner**, Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education
- **Jerry Kang**, Vice Chancellor for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion
- **Ertugrul Taciroglu**, Undergraduate Council Chair
- **Jessica Cattelino**, Graduate Council Chair
- **Lucy Burns**, FEC Rep

Program Staff Contact: **Brooke Wilkinson** (310-825-4307, bwilkinson@ucla.edu)

Academic Senate Staff Contact: **Eric Wells** (310-825-1194; ewells@senate.ucla.edu)

Appendix III: Self-Review Report

(The self-review report was previously distributed.

If you need a hard copy, please contact the Academic Senate Office at extension 53851.)