GENERAL EDUCATION FOR CTE:
NOTES from the 3rd TOWN HALL
January 21, 2011

The third Town Hall meeting to discuss General Education for the Career-Technical programs at Honolulu Community College was well attended, with approximately forty people in attendance. Chancellor Rota opened the discussion with an overview of the factors that require the college to examine this issue. Key points include the following:

- The nature of work and of the workforce has changed substantially in recent decades.
- CTE programs should be structured to prepare students for living-wage jobs.
- Both the earlier SCANS report (from the Secretary’s Commission for Attaining Necessary Skills) and the 2002 revised accreditation standards for degrees (not certificates) emphasize the inclusion of a General Education component.
- It should be noted that accreditation requirements parallel industry requirements.
- We need to acknowledge that the accelerated expectations of the community and industry are sometimes greater than our capacity to meet them, and that we need to change in order to better meet those changed or changing expectations.
- One case in point is the program at the Pearl Harbor Naval Shipyard, which is undergoing revision to meet requirements for the A.A.S. and to create a foundation for pre-baccalaureate work in engineering. The CENT program’s relationship with UH-West O’ahu is another example.
- With reference to the concern that CTE programs have about a credit limit, we need to provide adequate preparation, regardless of the number of credits required. It may be possible to meet SLOs with focused content embedded in program courses.

Several comments were offered in response to these opening remarks. Sam Rhoads (ICS) reiterated the need to include computing literacy in whatever revised General Education requirements were developed. Sandy Sanpei (CA) expressed concern about the credit compression and the “truth in advertising” question, since students are not always able to complete their degree within a two-year timeframe. Chancellor Rota again noted that it is not the credits per se, but ensuring that students are prepared to enter the workforce.

On the issue of credit requirements, Jess Aki (COSM, Co-Chair of the Gen Ed Working Group) noted that the college requires “…at least 60 credits” so this is a minimum, and some programs require more. Sam agreed that while part of this effort involves deciding how to distribute credits, we need to get away from the exclusive focus on the number of credits and develop specific pathways for each program. The Chancellor agreed in theory, but noted that we still need to have a way to validate student attainment.

Jerry Saviano (ENG), co-chair of the Gen Ed Working Group and Town Hall convenor, reminded those in attendance that the key objective of this meeting was to decide how to
move forward. Cynthia Smith (HIST, member of the Gen Ed Working Group) proposed developing a **General Education core**, to which individual programs could add other requirements. She reminded the group that the draft document that proposed a redefinition of categories and their hallmarks, and a realignment of courses within those categories, was intended to start discussion, not be considered the final plan. Ultimately, **each program has to look at its own needs, and be able to articulate how they will be met.** Sam again endorsed the need to agree on six categories and hallmarks as a basis for individual program consideration. Kara Kam-Kalani (SP) asked why Speech / Oral Communication wouldn’t also be a core requirement.

The Chancellor again noted that **discrete categories may not necessarily be needed if it can be demonstrated and verified that SLOs are achieved in other contexts.** He also raised the question of the **need to test for entry-level competency.** In response, Jerry expressed the concern that some programs currently do not have program requirements in writing and math, raising the question of whether this might jeopardize our basic eligibility for accreditation.

Beginning another thread in the discussion, Sherry Nolte (ECE) asked about the difference between hallmarks and SLOs; Sam suggested that hallmarks are not tied to a particular course, while SLOs are (i.e., hallmarks are more general or abstract; SLOs are more specific.) Jerry further explained that the hallmarks in the current draft were developed in response to UH statements and those in our current A.A. Cynthia further noted that some alignment or parity was important because students move between programs and/or degree paths. Gaynel Buxton (ECE) supported the need for cross-discipline cooperation and reiterated the concern about expanding program credits /time required to complete.

Vern Takebayashi (ICS) proposed that **subcommittees be formed to refine the hallmarks.** Cynthia said that since this involved potential program and curriculum changes, the Committee on Programs and Curricula (CPC) **would be the best already-established committee to coordinate further work;** Sam concurred. Jerry subsequently reiterated the understanding that the current working group would be reconstituted as a CPC subcommittee, with some members continuing to serve while new members might be added (e.g., academic deans and division chairs.) He noted that this was good progress in terms of clarifying the process as we move forward. Marcia Roberts-Deutsch (ART/WS, CPC Chair) agreed that this made sense and might also result in a further alignment with the General Education Board. She also reminded the group that **the need to make substantial progress on this question becomes more urgent the closer we get to completing our self-study for accreditation.**

The Chancellor reiterated a key point expressed in the second Town Hall: we need to keep in mind that **the relative proportion of General Education requirements in the A. A. and the CTE degrees is very different and that those requirements serve somewhat different purposes within the overall program context.**
The issue of **the number of required credits** led to further discussion. Sherry said the implications of increasing the number of credits should be carefully considered, but that this wasn’t the only option. Sally Dunan (CENT) suggested that if specific courses were to be certified as meeting particular hallmarks, **those courses could include CTE program courses as well as those in the Liberal Arts disciplines.** Jerry noted that other colleges require more courses for CTE degrees, and many of them specify that the Gen Ed courses be at the transfer level. He also acknowledged the concern about the “3rd year chimera”—the expansion of programs beyond the two-year model because of increased requirements.

The subject of **computing literacy** was again raised. Sam indicated that he wasn’t insisting on completing ICS 100 but wants students to graduate with that literacy, which is broader than a set of specific technical skills. Irene Mesina (Head Librarian) supports computing literacy and agrees that there are different ways for students to meet that requirement, including being able to test out of it. **The library would like to be included in a discussion of this requirement and could provide support for a course or workshops.**

In the context of the possibility that Gen Ed hallmarks could be met by content embedded within CTE programs, Ralph Kam (UC Dean) raised **the question of faculty preparation,** since professional requirements are different for CTE and Liberal Arts faculty. Sherry also noted that both skills and subject expertise are involved in addressing the hallmarks, though (as Sam noted) hallmarks are not course-based.

Diane Caulfield (Coop Ed) liked the idea of turning this question back to the individual programs. Marcia invited **comments from several counselors** who were present, since they would be involved on the front line in advising students. Shanon Miho appreciated the fact that this process was being done with deliberation, rather than at the 11th hour. Maggie Templeton agreed that clarity was essential before any changes were actually made. **Other CTE faculty offered their own perspectives:** George Boeman (CARP) acknowledged the essential need for better math skills in his program, Miles Nakanishi (ECE) noted that a lot of work was ahead for the CTE programs, and Scotty Rhode (FIRE) indicated that he felt they already do a lot, but could do more.

Notes prepared by Marcia Roberts-Deutsch