

August 8, 2022

Dear CMC Students:

As Co-Chairs of the Racial-Ethnic Cultural Understanding General Education (RE GE) Proposal, we wanted to provide a full and transparent update on the Proposal and notify you about crucial information left out of a memo (attached here) sent by the Dean of Faculty via ASCMC to you on June 2, 2022.

The Racial-Ethnic GE Proposal is a grassroots faculty initiative we started two years ago aimed at helping to prepare the next generation of responsible leaders by having all CMC students take one overlay course on racial-ethnic cultural understanding during their college career. This course should spend at least five weeks discussing two out of three criteria: racism (in any region of the world), the social construction of race-ethnicity (in any region), and the intellectual, social and cultural contributions of racial-ethnic minorities in the U.S. or around the world.

The Racial-Ethnic Cultural Understanding GE is an overlay course, meaning that it could double count towards both the RE GE requirement and another college GE requirement. For example, a Gov 20 course that met the above Racial-Ethnic GE criteria could double count to fulfill *both* the Gov 20 and the Racial-Ethnic GE requirements at the same time. In our call for RE GE course proposals last Spring/Fall 2021, 39 faculty from 9 CMC departments proposed 126 current, revised, and future courses, 72 of which have been approved to date. **Since most of these courses already count as a GE, this new RE GE would not automatically place any extra GE burden on students.**

The purpose of this GE is to help fulfill the College's mission and the Presidential Initiative on Anti-Racism's goal of preparing responsible leaders who can help ameliorate the impact of racism and foster greater racial-ethnic cultural understanding in the U.S. and around the world. Given the vitally important contributions of racial-ethnic minorities throughout history, we believe that this new GE is timely and will help CMC prepare responsible and effective leaders in the 21st-century.

In the spirit of the free expression of ideas, the Open academy, and viewpoint diversity, this GE has no ideological litmus tests or restrictions and we encourage faculty to teach it from their own disciplinary point of view. It went through two years of development via 9 faculty and 3 student meetings and many other conversations. Over sixty people have shaped the materials.

The great news is that after two years of discussion and debate, the CMC faculty took the historic and monumental step of voting to approve the Racial-Ethnic GE proposal on April 14, 2022, and then forwarded it to the Board of Trustees (BoT) for discussion and a vote.

Sadly, this hope was dashed by President Chodosh when at the Board of Trustees meeting in April he did not recommend to the Board that it vote on and approve the RE GE Proposal. Instead, he offered to present his own alternative ideas that would dilute the exclusive focus of this GE on race-ethnicity and ultimately kill this Proposal by not recommending to the Board that it vote on it. Without our presence at the Board meeting (we were denied access to speak) to counter the President's alternative ideas and answer any questions members might have, the Board simply followed his advice and authorized the President to do as he proposed. We believe you have a right to know this background information left out of the June 2nd memo. We should also note that ASCMC forwarded this memo on to the student body because it had reached out to the administration for an update on the GE Proposal. ASCMC leaders told us that they were unaware of the missing information and had assumed that the Dean had worked with faculty to craft the memo.

The June 2nd memo fails to mention vitally important information you should be aware of.

First, the CMC faculty voted to approve the RE GE Proposal on April 14, 2022 and then sent it to the Board of Trustees for discussion and a vote.

Second, faculty were denied the right to speak at the Board of Trustees meeting and answer any questions about the RE GE Proposal or the President's alternative ideas. By not recommending to the Board that it vote on the RE GE Proposal, the President effectively nullified the faculty vote and circumvented and bypassed faculty governance of the college.

Third, faculty never voted to accept the President's remand and proposed alternative course of action; at CMC, the faculty are entrusted with the responsibility to create and shape the College's curriculum.

Fourth, the RE GE Proposal is a grassroots faculty initiative and is not something created or controlled by the Dean or President.

Fifth, President Chodosh's actions are slated to be debated at the first faculty meeting this Fall. The CMC faculty at the May faculty meeting did not approve or provide feedback on anything the Dean outlined in the letter sent to all students on June 2nd.

In response to the President's actions, we sent out a petition to the CMC faculty asking them to support our request to present the RE GE Proposal directly to the Board of Trustees for a discussion and a vote this Fall 2022. We are greatly encouraged by the fact that 79 faculty from every CMC department signed the petition. We sent it to members of the Board of Trustees over 6 weeks ago, but have not yet heard back from them. We have also met with faculty and student leaders to discuss our next steps and will continue to do so this Summer and Fall.

If you want to get involved and/or attend an information session that we will hold on Friday, August 12 at 5:15pm PDT, please contact us both via email by 3pm PDT on Thursday, August 11: ([REDACTED]). We will send Zoom invitations that same afternoon.

Sincerely,

Gast

Gastón Espinosa (Prof. of Religious Studies) & Dan Livesay (Associate Professor of History)

At Professors Livesay and Espinosa's request, we have attached the original memo sent on June 2, 2022 below:

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Nisha Singh

Date: Thu, Jun 2, 2022 at 9:04 PM

Subject: Racial-Ethnic Cultural Understanding GE Update

To: dl-students_including-abroad <dl-students@students.claremontmckenna.edu>

6/2/2022 Racial-Ethnic Cultural Understanding GE Update

TL;DR

1. Ethnic Studies GE Process Ongoing, Will Continue Into Fall

2. President Chodosh, Board of Trustees, and Faculty Reviewing Details and Approaches

Dear students,

ASCMC has collaborated with the Dean of the Faculty to provide the following short-form update on the progress of the Racial-Ethnic Cultural Understanding GE.

What happened at the May 10th Faculty Meeting?

In order to both strengthen the focus of the objectives in alignment with the Presidential Initiative

and to broaden them more generally in connection with institution-wide learning objectives, President Chodosh, with full support of the Board of Trustees, remanded the proposal back to the faculty to answer a series of questions as outlined below.

What are the reviews?

1. Multiple Curricular Approaches

President Chodosh has asked each department to develop effective multiple curricular approaches, from introductory courses to requirements for supported majors.

2. Reviewing FWS/FHS Curriculum

The Curriculum Committee has been asked to develop an approach that would better integrate

the learning objectives effectively into that pre-existing required curriculum.

3. Coordinating Institution-Wide, Parallel Approaches

The Curriculum Committee, Faculty Steering Committee on the Presidential Initiative, Faculty Committee on the Open Academy, Dean of Faculty and DOS have been asked to devise parallel approaches to meet these objectives, including extra- and co-curricular experiences.

4. Assessment Measures

The Assessment Committee has been asked to:

1. Develop more explicit elaboration of our institutional learning objectives for responsible leadership in general, as well as specifically to include deepening understanding of all forms of social division, discrimination, and inequality.
2. Develop an assessment of how well GEs are meeting institutional objectives.
3. Develop a set of preliminary ideas for alternative, parallel approaches.

Next Steps

The initial reports will be submitted back to the Dean of the Faculty by October 15, 2022. The process of developing the CMC curriculum to provide a greater understanding of all forms of social division, discrimination, and inequality, including racial-ethnic issues, will continue this fall.

Following this initial phase, these requests (and responses) to them will be further refined and memorialized in consultation with faculty (including the foregoing groups identified above), students, staff, and the Board of Trustees.

Questions? Concerns?

Please feel free to contact ASCMC reps with questions and concerns:

Josh Nagra, President [REDACTED]

Nisha Singh, D&I Chair [REDACTED]

Aara Nanavaty, Academic Affairs Chair [REDACTED]

Thank you!

Best,

ASCMC