General Education Faculty Learning Community

Meeting 1: Reflections on General Education taken at Woodbury or elsewhere

- A breadth requirement for mathematics in the humanities that surveyed the fields of the discipline: trigonometry, topology, geometry, statistics, etc., presented in a manner that was engaging, challenging, and placing the new in the context of the familiar. It may not be what you need to use, but you understand why others use them and how their use shapes your world.
- A philosophy course where the daily exercise was to ask a critical question about the reading, written on an index card, and critiqued as to the critical nature of the question, always refining the answer to the question: what is a critical question? The experience led to further work in philosophy and rhetoric.
- A theory course in architecture where all the previous threads of general education: religion, math, chemistry, came together in a meaningful way, juxtaposing what you are interested in with what is unknown.
- Since the meaningfulness of a general education curriculum often comes later, what can be done to articulate consciously what makes a course fit for a general education curriculum?
- Perceptions of general education, especially whether it is instrumental/functional or holistic/personal, are often culture-dependent depending on the population of students.
- General education in India is non-existent; students take courses in their major and in ancillary support areas.
- General education is often both directed to specific goals and conceived of as liberal education, as having breadth and freedom.
- Would it be possible to use the list of the six principles as a framework to which individual courses are tied? What then of transfer students who take a majority of their general education elsewhere? And should the philosophy of general education transcend a given structure of courses?

Meeting 2: What have we learned about GE outside the classroom?

- The need for skills and content transference requires making such transference explicit, making connections known and making them regularly.
- The lived experiences of students are often disconnected: work, home, commuting, school, all are separate pieces in which a university
education, not to mention its general education program, is simply one more piece, making the creation of community difficult at best.

- The style of education used in universities: linear, logical, connective may not fit the way the brain processes information and learning: branching, jumping, associative.
- What is the correlation between learning outcomes and students’ grades?
- The rate of transfer form community colleges and the effect on learning outcomes: is this based on quantitative data?
- Institutional organization has a significant effect on student learning in terms of framing questions, required solutions, and the organization of time. To what extent does a general education program contribute to this disconnection?

A bibliography is maintained by Diane Zwemer in the Library: this link takes you directly to the Gen Ed references:
http://www.refworks.com/refshare?site=030561118386800000/1171018/General%20Education

You can also get to it from RefWorks in the RefShare area:
http://www.refworks.com/refshare/?site=030561118386800000

Meeting 3: Research and Models: What Interested You

- Washington State University: Organized by tiers, including a synthetic ‘capstone’ course (tier 3), a diversity requirement, and a writing portfolio.
  http://www.catalog.wsu.edu/Catalog/Content/GeneralEducation.pdf
- CSU Monterrey Bay: Each area defined as a university learning requirement, with outcomes, courses and assessment listed on the website. Each area has multiple departments delivering courses, as overseen by a faculty learning community.
  http://csumb.edu/academic/catalog/archive/fall2005/x4374.html
- Emerson College: Arranges general education into three areas: foundations, perspectives and diversity where perspectives reflect the emphases of the college: aesthetics, history, interdisciplinarity, etc. and diversity emphasizes global and U.S.
- Trinity University: Organized into five fundamental understandings and a senior capstone experience using several options.
  http://www.trinity.edu/departments/public_relations/Academic/common_curriculum.htm
- CSU Sonoma: Like the above, using a first-year experience, a capstone and writing across the curriculum as well as rigorous assessment, to reshape general education.
Harvard University: Uses eight different areas to define general education that are both disciplinary and interdisciplinary.

Mills College: Defined by a set of learning outcomes, grouped as skills, perspectives, and disciplinary experiences, for which multiple courses satisfy the requirements.

James Madison University: An award winning structure for general education using a thorough program review, an organization by clusters and an oversight council; each cluster has a coordinator and committee with clearly defined learning outcomes.

Pellissippi State Technical Community College: Good model of assessment based on eight general education goals using multiple options and measures.

Shared Futures Project: A consortium of colleges and universities using global perspectives to shape a general education curriculum.

Participants: Nageswar Chekuri, Douglas Cremer, Vic Liptak, Rich Matzen, Will McConnell, Behnoush McKay, Randy Stauffer, Diane Zwemer

Meetings conducted November, 2007

General Education Staff Learning Community

Meeting 1: Reflections on General Education taken at Woodbury or elsewhere

- General education is increasingly more specific; remembering taking more math than is now required.
- Remember taking math because you needed to take math.
- Remember them as breadth requirements – need to take this, take that – harder than major courses.
- Remember taking logic; able to communicate effectively in English language.
- Remember math and writing; skill based in other courses.
- Remember when asking why one took GE courses the answer was to have cocktail chatter.
Remember when asking why one took math, the answer was “to be able to build a box!”

Remember that it was better when material was made relevant, how it affects you personally; writing – because of iteration and practice – now remembers it better.

GE is not always prescribed; it can be fun!

Some courses are for skills; others, later on, can complement your major.

These GE skills can help you in everyday life.

Remember taking GE courses to broaden and explore aspects of the curriculum; had great dynamic teachers.

Can’t remember much of own GE experience. What are we teaching our children about GE? Means to an end?

Meeting 2: What have we learned about GE outside the classroom?

- General education needs to be flexible, adaptable
- Generally educated person – agreement in theory, not reality
- Challenge – most GE courses taken elsewhere so any revision, even attractive courses, need to counter students taking courses elsewhere
- If transfer students complete GE (matriculate as a Junior) but only a sophomore in the major, why not have GE embedded in lower level major courses, maybe team-taught, like Graphic Design and Humanities
- Must keep transfers in the curriculum
- Do IS courses need better definition, description?
- SOAR: where to find better definition of GE and major requirements
- Alignment of services to make process seamless

- FT faculty need to teach entry-level courses

Meeting 3: Research and Models: What Interested You

Schools Examined:

James Madison University
http://www.jmu.edu/gened/

Chapman University
http://www.chapman.edu/academics/ge/

CSU Northridge
GE not always meeting the needs of our students
Acceptance of GE as integral to a Woodbury education
Advising is key: some advisors stress “just take GE, get it out of the way!”
Students need a rationale for taking GE
Architecture wants studio, studio, studio!
Challenge of the place of GE in a professional school setting
GE needs to filtered better through individual majors
Broad and flexible enough for each department to adapt it to be more obviously applicable
Can we deal with remediation in a better way?
Should there be GE advisors?
Assessment of GE and grading; sequencing of classes – course 1B instructor wants to know what course A instructor taught and whether students learned the material
Writing across the disciplines
Transfer-friendly GE courses

Participants: Ilene Blaisch, Tamara Blok, Phyllis Cremer, Paul Decker, Mauro Diaz, Anne Ehrlich, Verletta Jackson, Ruth Lorenzana, Ruth Luna, Cleo Williams

Meetings held November-December, 2007

General Education Student Learning Community

Meeting 1: Reflections on General Education taken at Woodbury or elsewhere

Art History not related to Business curriculum
Professor did not feel passion for subject
• Did not feel a connection to the subject due to lack of passion for subject on the part of the instructor
• Did not understand the “language” of the course
• Information literacy – already knew material, waste of time
• Placement exams are not always accurate
• Courses do not account for different ability levels
• More variety that appeals to majors other than design; more general classes – broader not necessarily deeper
• More “modern” topics, need classes that teach us what is happening at the present moment
• Students do not know what GE means and sometimes advisors do not either!
• GE seen as building blocks to understand your major
• GE seen as a continuation or review of high school
• Level of challenge too low
• Do not understand why they are necessary
• Can lead to minors
• Courses need a context in the overall framework
• Sequential courses: higher expectations should come with higher numbered courses
• Quality of teachers: adjunct faculty teach too many of the classes

Meeting 2: What have we learned about GE outside the classroom?

• You have a voice
• Assertiveness
• Want to forge an identity
• Faculty members have great impact on the outcome of the course
• Lack of passionate instructors
• Seeing faculty connecting with class
• Lifelong learning is important
• General education should challenge the student
• Need a “full” college experience
• Need for better syllabus preparation

Meeting 3: Research and Models: What Interested You

• James Madison: 5 clusters, no more than 6 courses; titles reflect “application” of courses
  http://www.jmu.edu/gened/
- Carnegie Mellon: foreign language requirement, PE courses
  [http://www.hss.cmu.edu/gened/requirements.html](http://www.hss.cmu.edu/gened/requirements.html)
- Chapman: clusters – world cultures, foreign language, global requirement
  [http://www.chapman.edu/academics/ge/](http://www.chapman.edu/academics/ge/)
- University of Washington: areas of knowledge, clusters
- Indiana University: “tailor your own program for GE”
- Otis College of Art and Design: Math classes for artists and designers; all GE in first year
- CSU Northridge: Today’s Social Issues; SFV Local Issues; GEs tied to majors
  [http://www.csun.edu/ugs/geplan.html](http://www.csun.edu/ugs/geplan.html)
- Williams College: General education about different cultures
- Harvard University: “relevant and applied”
  [http://www.fas.harvard.edu/home/news_and_events/releases/gened_02072007.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/home/news_and_events/releases/gened_02072007.html)

Participants: Ani Okkasian, Anthony David, Bridgette Tattersall, Britni Barkley, Mihir Jogani, Cesar Magallon, Stan Salas, Aldriel Villaflor

Meetings conducted February, 2008