

General Education for the 21st Century: Conception, Implementation, Sustainability

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Introduction

- “American students already know they want a degree. The challenge is to help students become highly intentional about the forms of learning and accomplishment that the degree should represent.” -- 2007 LEAP Report
- How can we as educators implement General Education to achieve this goal?
- How do we effect change in culture on our campuses to sustain implementation?

Where we start....

- We start with the assumption that you want to reform general education and are here to work on your conception of it.
- Our focus is less on the substance of the work in which you are engaged, although both of us have been fully engaged in that, but on making it happen.

We wish to acknowledge...

Rita C. Kean, Nancy D. Mitchell, and David E. Wilson (University of Nebraska—Lincoln).
“Toward Intentionality and Transparency: Analysis and Reflection on the Process of General Education Reform.” *Peer Review*. (Fall 2008, vo. 10, No. 4).

How we will proceed....

- Gail will discuss the internal, practical work of implementing General Education reform...
- Joe will discuss the external, political work of developing and implementing General Education reform....

General Education Revisited: Successes and Challenges

- We bring different experiences on General Education reform: San José State University (SJSU), San Francisco State University (SF State), George Mason University (GMU), and the University of Southern Maine (USM).
- Although each institution has a unique set of circumstances, certain commonalities cross any campus change initiative.

Steps to Campus Change

- Get campus involvement from all constituencies.
- Link your proposed changes to other campus initiatives or plans.
- Ensure the support of your administration.
- Recognize faculty ownership of the curriculum and support faculty leadership.

Steps to Campus Change (con't)

- Develop a “road map” or timeline for implementation.
- Determine the effect of and on existing policies and procedures.
- Commit resources.
- Develop an assessment plan for your work.
- Recognize that the work in which you are engaged is inherently political.....

Steps to Campus Change (con't)

**So how have these steps worked
(or not), in “real-life” situations?**

General Education in the California State University System

- Executive Order approved in June 2008:
3.2 CSU Student Learning Outcomes: *Each CSU campus shall define its GE student learning outcomes, to fit within the framework of the four “Essential Learning Outcomes” drawn from the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) campaign, an initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities.*

LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes Framework

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World
- Intellectual and Practical Skills
- Personal and Social Responsibility
- Integrative Learning



The San José Story of GE Reform and Assessment

- Fall 1998: Implemented new GE Guidelines that were predicated on course-embedded assessment, as well as a diversity requirement across the curriculum
- 1998-2001: Approximately 280 courses were submitted for re-certification. Course proposals required a plan to assess student learning based on evaluation of Student Learning Objectives

<http://www.sjsu.edu/ugs/ge/>

http://www.aacu.org/aacu_news/aacunews07/february07/feature.cfm

Certification & Continuing Certification Processes

- 2004: Eliminated a “check the box” format in relaying GE requirements to students and faculty
- 2001-2008: Course coordinators submitted assessment summaries and course syllabi indicating how students were assessed, the results of those assessments, and appropriate course modifications based on the assessments

SJSU Studies

Integrated Knowledge of an Educated Person

These courses will help students become integrated thinkers who can see connections between and among a variety of concepts and ideas. An educated person will be able to apply concepts and foundations learned in one area to other areas as part of a lifelong learning process. These courses will help students to live and work intelligently, responsibly, and cooperatively in a multicultural society and to develop abilities to address complex issues and problems using disciplined analytical skills and creative techniques.

Earth and Environment (R) (3 units)

Self, Society & Equality in the U.S. (S) (3 units)

Culture, Civilization & Global Understanding (V) (3 units)

Written Communication II (Z) (3 units)

Graduation Requirements: American Institutions (may be satisfied in Core) (0-6 units)

Physical Education (0-2units)

(may be satisfied by two different activity courses)

TOTAL UNITS:

39 Units CORE

9-12 Units SJSU Studies

2005 Revision of GE Guidelines

- When the 1998 Guidelines were approved by the Academic Senate, there was a stipulation for campus review in 2005
- To ensure campus buy-in for the continued culture change from solely “teaching-centered” to both “learning and teaching-centered”, many strategies were utilized



2005 Revised GE Guidelines

- Included overall GE program learning outcomes that are tied to the SJSU mission statement, the AAC&U *Greater Expectations Report*, and the *LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes*
- Changed name of upper division GE from *Advanced GE* to *SJSU Studies*. All courses in *SJSU Studies* must be from a different department.
- Student learning objectives added across curriculum for:
 - Information literacy
 - Values clarification
 - Civic Learning

Governance of General Education: Board of General Studies and GE Advisory Panels

- Solicit courses and curricular proposals designed to satisfy GE requirements from all colleges and departments of the University.
- Review, approve, and authorize courses and curricular proposals for GE.
- Evaluate courses and curricula (including assessment) they have approved.
- There are now more than 80 faculty participating in the assessment and review process each semester.

Assessment Challenges in a Large GE Program

- Menu of more than 200 courses in 18 different GE areas
- More than 300 instructors teaching GE, a large portion of whom are part-time
- More than 500 sections of GE courses in any given semester
- GE goals that are not necessarily aligned with standardized tests



How Course Embedded Assessment Meets the Challenges

- Articulates well defined GE Student Learning Objectives (SLOs)
- Provides a great deal of flexibility for faculty in developing their assessment plans
- Allows faculty to use existing assignments and exams for assessing student outcomes
- Eliminates students from having to take additional tests outside of class
- Provides more immediate and focused feedback leading to faster implementation of course modifications

SLOs for One Area of SJSU Studies: Culture, Civilization, & Global Understanding

- Students shall be able to:
 - compare systematically the ideas, values, images, cultural artifacts, economic structures, technological developments, and/or attitudes of people from more than one culture outside the U.S.;
 - identify the historical context of ideas and cultural traditions outside the U.S. and how they have influenced American culture; and
 - explain how a culture outside the U.S. has changed in response to internal and external pressures.

Content Objectives

- **Diversity.** Issues of diversity shall be incorporated in an appropriate manner.
- **Writing**
- **Civic Learning.** Courses shall address the civic relevance of the topic in an appropriate manner.
- **Values Clarification.** Students should demonstrate their ability to articulate and discuss their values and engage in civil discourse.
- Courses will address significant achievements of the human intellect and imagination in a comparative context to understand and appreciate different ideas, cultures, values, religions, institutions, languages, and peoples of the world.

Assessment

- Assessment
 - Writing shall be assessed for grammar, clarity, conciseness and coherence.
 - In accordance with the approved assessment plan, the course coordinator/department chair will summarize the assessment results according to the procedure for submitting courses for continuing certification in General Education.

Course Continuing Certification Philosophy

- Assessment as **pathway to success** vs. **gateway**
- Mentoring of faculty
- No decisions until the decision is **“YES”**
- Education of faculty regarding GE objectives and assessment
- Sharing of best practices



GE Program Objectives “Mapped” to LEAP Outcomes

Students who complete the General Education curriculum should be able to demonstrate:

- A broad understanding of the sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts; (LEAP 1)
- An ability to communicate ideas effectively both in speaking and in writing; (LEAP 2)
- The capacity for critical and creative thinking; (LEAP 2)

GE Program Objectives (continued)

- An understanding of ethical choices inherent in human development; (LEAP 3)
- An ability to assess information (information literacy); (LEAP 2)
- An ability to address complex issues and problems using disciplined analytic skills and creative techniques; (LEAP 2)

GE Program Objectives (continued)

- Multicultural and global perspectives gained through intellectual and social exchange with people of diverse backgrounds and experiences; (LEAP 3)
- The characteristics of “intentional learners” who can adapt to new environments, integrate knowledge from different sources, and continue learning throughout their lifetimes; and (LEAP 4)
- The capacity to participate as a socially responsible member of civic, professional, cultural, and other communities. (LEAP 3)

Mapping Course- Embedded Assessment to Overall Program Objectives

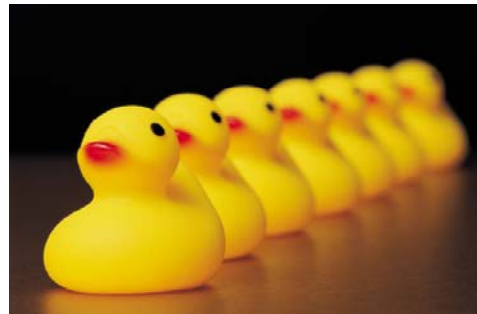
- Take data for course-embedded student learning objectives and “map” to overall program objectives
- Yields first set of data for assessing the overall Core GE and SJSU Studies programs
- Developing a process to move from course-embedded to assessment of program objectives for all courses
- Will add additional measures such as e-portfolios (SAIL), Wabash Study, capstone course

Successes to Date

- Completion of Assessment of GE Assessment (surveys and focus groups; overview prepared for WASC re-accreditation)
- Identification of model assessment summaries – posting on web
- Identification of models of the diversity requirement
- Identification of common problems in GE courses
 - 3 roundtable discussions in spring 2002 (active learning, course coordination, under-prepared students)
 - Surveys from GE Course Coordinators, Deans, Chairs prior to drafting 2005 GE revisions
 - 4 focus groups in 2005 on proposed revisions
- Appointment of GE faculty in residence at Center for Faculty Development & Support
- Sharing of best practices for SJSU Studies

Remaining Challenges

- Continue assessment of overall GE Program Objectives
- Continue to improve assessment procedures, including going “paperless” with all documents being submitted electronically and decreasing workload for faculty without decreasing quality of assessment



General Education Revision at SF State

- Graduation Requirements Task Force working on baccalaureate degree requirements, including GE
- Spring 2008 adopted baccalaureate goals
(www.sfsu.edu)
- January 2009 distributed draft revisions for campus input



Proposed Upper Division General Education Options

Option 1 Topical Perspectives (9 units)

Choose one **Topical Perspective** and take one course from each of the three **Domains of Knowledge and Inquiry**.

Creativity, Innovation and Invention

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

Enduring Ideas, Values and Achievements

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

Ethical Reasoning and Action

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

Human Diversity

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

Life in San Francisco and/or Bay Area

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

Personal and Community Well Being

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

Social Justice and Civic Knowledge/Engagement

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

World Perspectives

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

Option 2 Integrated Study (9 units)

Three courses that have been devised by a faculty team into a coherent, integrative program of study.

The program as a whole must integrate the following groupings of **Domains of Knowledge and Inquiry**:

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

Option 3 Study Abroad (9 units)

A minimum of eight units of coursework with at least five units abroad, and a one-unit course upon return to campus.

The program as a whole must integrate the following groupings of **Domains of Knowledge and Inquiry**:

- (1) Physical and/or Life Sciences
- (2) Arts and/or Humanities
- (3) Social Sciences

My own journey, because the work is personal....

Learning to teach world regional geography in one semester.....

Learning to listen to students.

Recognizing that learning is relational.

Figuring out how to help students achieve my standards, not lower my standards.

Recognizing that problems of learning are systemic, so solutions must be too....

The Work

Understanding that General Education work is really:

- Community organizing work
- Capacity building work
- Faculty development work

Learning from the Gen Ed Wars at George Mason University

Three episodes:

- Losing the Gen Ed war in the 1980s...
- The Zero-Based Curriculum and New Century College: “A Large Faculty Development Project”
- The Heritage Foundation’s General Education plan.....

USM's Coreless and Corrupt Core

- A smorgasbord of courses
- Perceived as a hurdle
- Ineffective with respect to retention and student success
- Irrelevant, especially to transfer students
- No accountability; no means for assessment and improvement
- Faculty members unable to articulate the purpose of the Core

Re-envisioning General Education at USM

- Vision, Goals, and Outcomes, all informed by Greater Expectations, etc.
- Vertical envelopment of the baccalaureate
- Reiteration and reinforcement of competencies and dispositions
- Responsive to transfer students
- Multiple pathways
- See:

http://www.aacu.org/aacu_news/AACUNews07/June07/feature.cfm

Lessons/Principles–1:

- The Administrative role is to provoke the question, articulate the vision, frame and promote the work, ensure resources, and provide rewards.
- The work requires Adaptive Change, not Technical Fixes. (See Heifetz and Linsky on leadership and adaptive change....)

Effecting Adaptive Change-1

- Don't settle for technical fixes
- Raise disequilibrium to a tolerable level:
 - Challenge the status quo
 - de-naturalize the curriculum.
 - Reveal the hidden curriculum
 - ask whose purposes are being served.

Effecting Adaptive Change-2

Turn the work back to the owners:

- The Faculty owns the curriculum, and it should.
- Faculty agency and leadership are necessary to success and to ensure accountability.

Effecting Adaptive Change-3

- Be open to unpredictable outcomes.
- Push the work down deep into the organization.
- Make the work transparent.
- Communicate, communicate, and communicate some more....

Lessons/Principles-2:

Anticipate **external forces** affecting general education, unless faculty exercise ownership:

- The Heritage Foundation experience
- State and National higher education debate
- Regional Accreditation and Assessment
- Professional School Accreditation

Lessons/Principles-3:

- Anticipate **internal resistance**, including constructively critical resistance, within the faculty:
 - Concern for loss of control of courses and majors
 - Concern for change in work load
 - Concern that the work is hard and leads to burnout
 - Concern for cost and sustainability

More internal resistance

Rhetorical resistance will include:

- Student-centered vs. learning-centered
- Outcomes vs. dispositions
- Academic freedom..

Be prepared to engage these concerns

Whose “Greater Expectations” Are They, Anyway?

See Rose Clearly and Eve Raimon (University of Southern Maine), *Whose “Greater Expectations” Are They, Anyway? Exposing the Tensions within the Rhetoric of Education Reform. Liberal Education* (Winter 2009), pp. 30-35

Some Key Actions-1:

Connect to strategic plans:

- The 2001 USM Plan—offered the intellectual vision.

- The 2005 University of Maine System Plan's Strategic Direction One: Student Success—was informed by the USM work.

Some Key Actions-2:

The Faculty Seminar

- Turn the keys over to the owners to lead design and implementation.

But also involve:

- Part-time faculty
- Librarians and student affairs specialists
- Community college partners

Some Key Actions-3:

Build Capacity to help provide legitimacy—USM examples:

- Foundation funds for faculty development activities
- AAC&U for summer workshops (and publicity)
- Libra Scholar as consultant/cheerleader/expert
- Convocation themes
- Russell Chair in Philosophy and Education

Some Key Actions-4:

Divide and Conquer: USM's three General Education Programs

- The Honors Program
- Lewiston-Auburn College
- The (New) Core Curriculum

Some Key Actions-5:

Connect general education intellectually
to the disciplines:

- Liberal arts and sciences
- Professional programs

Aside: Expect an effect on majors
too.....

Some Key Actions-6:

Build a coherent and democratic governance structure:

- Faculty Senate
- General Education Council
 - Core Council
 - LAC faculty
 - Honors faculty
- Associate Provost

Some Key Actions-7:

Build a Transition Implementation Plan with time line that includes:

- Commitment of resources
- Faculty development program
- Transition issues

Transition Issues.....

- Develop a Conversion Plan for continuing students to transition from the old to the new.
- Develop a Transfer Equivalency Plan to ensure or even enhance the flow of transfer students, especially from pipeline partners.

Present status at USM-1

- 2004 Faculty Senate approved the Vision Statement of the General Education Council.
- 2004-2005 USM teams at AAC&U Summer Workshops
- 2005 Faculty Senate approved guidelines for pathways
- 2006 First Entry-Year Experience (EYE) Courses piloted.
- 2006 Faculty Senate approved Lewiston-Auburn College pathway for implementation in Fall 2007.
- 2007 Arts and Sciences faculty developed new core.

Present status at USM-2

- April 2008: Faculty Senate approved phased implementation of new core with EYE courses required of all new students in Fall 2009.
- December 2008: Faculty Senate resolved that the fiscal crisis was reason to postpone implementation.
- January 2009: Administration demonstrated capacity to implement despite fiscal crisis.
- January 2009: New president praises the work, but reform remains a work in progress, as it should.....

Drawing Conclusions-1:

In the end, General Education work is:

- Community Organizing
- Capacity Building
- Faculty Development

Drawing Conclusions-2:

General Education work requires:

- Practical work
- Political work
- Personal investment
- Patience
- Persistence

... and above all, a good sense of humor!

The end.....

Thank You!!
Questions?/Comments?