A Four-Year Approach to General Education: Is it too much or is it ever enough?

AAC&U Annual Meeting

January 23, 2015
Presenters

- Dr. Elaine Maimon, President
- Dr. Deborah Bordelon, Provost
- Dr. Reinhold Hill, Dean College of Arts & Sciences
- Dr. Aurelio Valente, Interim VP Student Affairs, Dean of Students
- Dr. Colleen Sexton, Associate Provost
- Dr. Ann Vendrely, Associate Provost
Governors State University

- Founded in 1969 as an Upper Division University
- 35 Miles South of Chicago
- Serves 5 regional Community College Partners and 17 members in the Dual Degree Program
Transformation 2014

• Opened first residence hall with 204 students (undergraduate, transfer and graduate)
• Added Athletics with competitive men's & women's basketball teams
• Admitted first class of freshmen (242 students)
GSU Fall 2014 Enrollments

- 2,191 Graduate
- 3,585 Undergraduate
- Of that:
  - 242 First year students
    - 64% Female/36% male
    - 60.3% African American
    - 15.7% Caucasian
    - 12% Latino/a
    - 8.3% Unreported
    - 100% full time
    - Average age 19.1 years
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Creation of Robust General Education Program

Broad View of General Education

- Incorporating best practices based on research
- Measuring both the general education and major student learning outcomes
- Incorporating native and transfer students
- Full four year curriculum

GE Task Force

- Cooperative effort of faculty and administrators created by the Faculty Senate
- Reviewed national research, attended conferences and based the program on best-practices
Implementing the Lower Division

Lower Division Steering Committee:
• Cross-functional
• Cross-divisional
• Includes academic, student affairs, and admissions and marketing leadership
• Includes faculty and general education leaders
• Charged to propose creation and revision of policy
• Think innovatively about tightly integrated curricular and co-curricular activities and support
Admissions: Providing Access

Placement and Early Start Committee:

- Faculty from each of the four colleges
  - Mathematics
  - English
- Admissions representatives
- Dean of Arts and Sciences

Reviewed applications and made placement decisions
Early Engagement

Admitted students’ options prior to the start of Smart Start:

• Given access to online mathematics placement instrument (ALEKS) to engage in improving mathematical conceptual knowledge and skills

• Invited to participate in campus events and activities
Smart Start

✓ Used instead of remediation courses
✓ All students invited to participate
✓ Required for those who did not meet minimum admission guidelines
✓ Began two weeks before classes
✓ Designed to build confidence and address common issues found in mathematics and writing courses
✓ Included *Mastering College* seminars
Supplemental Instruction

Smart Start for English and Mathematics:
• Available to all, required for Smart Start participants
• Sustained through supplemental instruction sections throughout the semester
  – Extra sessions once a week with content area faculty
  – Access to tutors
Development of Student Learning Outcomes

Designed with input from:

- GE Task Force
- Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes, and
- Faculty Senate, based on:
  - LEAP and
  - Degree Qualifications Profile (Lumina)
GE Student Learning Outcomes (SLO)

- Foundational Knowledge
- Practical Skills
- Social Responsibility
- Integrative Learning
- Assessment of learning outcomes includes use of VALUE Rubrics (Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education) and ePortfolios
High Impact Teaching Practices

• First-Year Seminars and Experiences
• Common Intellectual Experiences
• Learning Communities
• Writing-Intensive Courses
• Collaborative Assignments and Projects
• Student Employment*
• Undergraduate Research
• Diversity/Global Learning
• Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
• Internships
• Capstone Courses and Projects
• Peer Mentoring*
Sequence of General Education

Year 1: Cohort courses (9 credit hours) Fall + Spring

Year 2: Cohort courses (9 credit hours) Fall

Year 3: Junior Seminar: Introduction to the Major (Fall)

Year 4: Scholarly Capstone
Themes for First Year Students

• Selected based on current campus initiatives and committees
• Topics are:
  – Civic Engagement
  – Global Citizenship
  – Sustainability
• Connect course work with living/learning communities
Cohort Model - Three Semesters

Inside the Cohort (9 credits per semester)

- Fall 2014
  - First Year Seminar
  - Writing Studies 1
  - History of the US to 1865

- Spring 2015
  - Foundations of American Democracy
  - Writing Studies 2
  - Art Appreciation

- Fall 2015
  - Principles of Macroeconomics
  - Public Discourse
  - Principles of Psychology

Outside the Cohort (3-7 credits)

- Fall 2014
  - Math requirement
  - Science course

- Spring 2015
  - Science course
  - Elective

- Fall 2015
  - Elective: Career Explorations
  - Elective

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GE courses:
- Taught by new and veteran full-time professors
- Some taught by faculty teams
- Classes are limited to no more than 30 students, except for freshmen composition class, which was limited to 18 students
Faculty Involved in FYS

• Competitive process for faculty to participate
  – Application
  – Proposed topics for the theme
  – Willingness to teach multiple years

• 11 faculty teaching 8 sections (three in teams)

  – All teams have a tenured/tenure track member
  – All four colleges represented:
    • Health & Human Services
    • Business & Public Administration
    • Education
    • Arts & Sciences
First Year Seminar (FYS)

Developed a robust mandatory First Year Seminar course:

• Interdisciplinary Humanities (3 credits) fully transferable
• Writing intensive
• Includes a peer mentoring program using upper division students
Student Affairs Involvement

Dr. Aurelio Valente

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Key Partner for Student Success

Student Affairs involved in:

• Recruiting and training peer mentors for:
  ✓ FYS
  ✓ Mastering College Course
  ✓ Spring term cohort classes

• Academic advising for all freshmen
Focus on Student Success

Student Success Team members:

- Peer mentors
- Writing fellows
- Math tutor
- Library liaison
- Counseling intern
- Digital learning support
Student Engagement Initiatives

- Focus on Student Employment, modeled after Iowa GROW program
- Launched comprehensive Leadership Initiatives, including Emerging Leaders for new students
- New students also able to participate in Men’s and Women’s Leadership retreats, Inclusive Leadership Conference, and Peer Leadership course for academic credit
- Expanded initiatives focused on student engagement of new students in Student Life and Civic Engagement
- Increased utilization of social media
Student Affairs as Partners in Learning

• Established learning focused mission and vision, rather than previously existing “student services” model
  ✓ Adopted principles of “Student Learning Imperative” document by ACPA and NASPA

• Introduced learning outcomes assessment at departmental level and mapped to divisional learning outcomes focused on:

  1. self-efficacy and determination
  2. personal, academic and professional success
  3. multicultural competence, and
  4. leadership and civic engagement

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Transfer Students and The Center for the Junior Year

Dr. Deborah Bordelon

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Dual Degree Program (DDP)

• The Dual Degree Program (DDP) created in 2010 is a unique partnership between GSU and 17 Chicagoland community colleges that provides full-time students with an excellent pathway to earn quality, accessible, and affordable associate and bachelor’s degrees.

• The DDP program is funded by GSU and a grant from the Kresge Foundation.
  – to qualify for the DDP, the student must be a full-time student who has completed 12 to 45 credit hours, and
  – is in good academic standing at one of our partner community colleges.

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Dual Degree Program (DDP)

• Spring 2014, 97% of the 178 DDP students who attained their associate degree and transferred had either earned their bachelor’s degrees or remained enrolled at GSU
• Fall 2014:
  – 249 DDP students have transferred and are enrolled at GSU
  – Another 331 are actively engaged at a partner institution, working their way toward their associate degree and on the path to a baccalaureate—a total of 580 students
Center for the Junior Year

- Innovative strategy to bring together transfer and “native” students
- Designed to have a physical and virtual presence
- Focus on academic performance, social integration and retention
- Center houses a Director, Advisors, and Student Transition Assistants
Center for the Junior Year

Designed to address the needs of three distinct populations:

• Students that start at GSU as Freshmen (approximately 10%)
• Dual Degree Program participants (approximately 10%)
• Traditional transfer students with at least 45 credit hours (approximately 80%)

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Center for the Junior Year

The Center:

• provides workshops, seminars and advising during the sophomore and junior years on how to select majors, transition into a major and internship opportunities;

• will promote research initiatives on retention and student success; and

• will sponsor workshops for faculty on pedagogy and best practices and support the development and delivery of Junior Seminar courses.
Junior Seminar &
Senior Capstone Courses

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Junior Seminar

Integration
- Undergrads who started in freshman cohort
- Transferring juniors

Transition
- From broad intellectual experience of GE coursework
- To focused study of a particular field

Conceptual Development
- Substantive study with intro to significant concepts and the nature of inquiry within the discipline
- Writing intensive
- Reinforce GE SLO for foundational knowledge, practical skills, and social responsibility
Senior Capstone

✓ provide a demonstrably integrative learning experience;
✓ assess student learning outcomes relative to the major through course activities;
✓ provide learning experiences designed to meet SLO for integrative learning;
✓ designated as a writing intensive; and
✓ offer students the opportunity to complete over one semester or more and earn at least three-credit hours.
Capstone Design Options

- Research Based
- Internship
- Interdisciplinary
- Creative Senior Project
- Service Learning Project
Summary

- Liberal Education and America’s Promise - LEAP
- Lumina Foundation – Degree Qualifications Profile

Essential Learning Outcomes
• Provide the guiding vision and national benchmarks for college learning and liberal education in the 21st century

High Impact Educational Practices
• Help students achieve essential learning outcomes

Inclusive Excellence
• Ensure that every student gets the benefits of an engaged and practical liberal education

Authentic Assessments
• Continuous assessment of programmatic elements and “lessons learned” through implementation of SLOs
Questions?

• Slides and references available on request from  AVendrely@govst.edu;  CSexton@govst.edu;  DBordelon@govst.edu;  AValente@govst.edu;  RHill@govst.edu
• Business cards available if you want to contact any of us later
• Thank you for your participation!
Research to Inform Decisions


• Glbahar, Yasemin and Hasan Tinmaz. (2006). *Implementing Project-Based Learning and E-Portfolio Assessment in an Undergraduate Course*. [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/2a/5b/57.pdf](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICDocs/data/ericdocs2sql/content_storage_01/0000019b/80/2a/5b/57.pdf)


