Communicating with Students about the Value of General Education

Kit Murphy, Associate Provost, The College of New Jersey

Please connect to the Internet
Wifi: Hyatt Meeting Rooms  Password: AACU
“Alex, I’ll try ‘Sounds Familiar’ for $200.”

“I'm here to learn Computer Science and Interactive Multimedia - not Religion or Sociology. Forcing students to take certain classes that are outside of their interests makes me feel like I'm back in high school. College is supposed to be better than that, where you can really focus on what you want to do in life.”
“Alex, I’ll try ‘Sounds Familiar’ for $200.”

“I know this may be a long shot but the class I am in right now, AAS 252, is about social change and historical perspectives but it does not have that in the course attribute because it already gets rid of my race and ethnicity requirement and my gender req.”
“Alex, I’ll try ‘Sounds Familiar’ for $200.”

“I know this may be a long shot but the class I am in right now, AAS 252, is about social change and historical perspectives but it does not have that in the course attribute because it already gets rid of my race and ethnicity requirement and my gender req.”
Communicating with Students about the Value of General Education

I. Goals of GenEd communication.
II. Why is it important that students value GenEd?
III. Student and faculty perceptions of GenEd.
IV. Avenues of communication.
V. Instructors and advisors.
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What are we trying to communicate about GenEd?

How much of your (institution’s) efforts is devoted to each?
Wifi network: Hyatt Meeting Rooms
Password: AACU

What percent of your institution's communication efforts are devoted to:
Distribute 100 points between why and how using the -10 and +10 buttons.

The WHY of GenEd
-10 0 +10
100 points left

The HOW of GenEd
-10 0 +10
100 points left

Submit
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Why is it important that students value general education?

Some ideas?
Why is it important that students value general education?

“All the people in the world that want to study French literature can do so, they are just not going to be subsidized by the taxpayer.” January 2016

Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin
Washington and Lee University
East Asian Studies
Reclaiming the narrative on the value of higher education?

GenEd got in the way of my major.

Why did they make me take GenEd?

My GenEd courses weren’t relevant.

Wish I could’ve taken more major courses instead of GenEds.
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How much do students and faculty value GenEd?
• Public, comprehensive
• 6800 undergrads, 650 graduate students
• Selective, high retention/graduation
• Seven schools (four professional)
• Liberal arts core
• GenEd = “Liberal Learning”
How much do students and faculty value GenEd?

**Surveys**

*Students*
- Randomly selected students (500)
- 43% response rate (N = 214)
- Representative by class level and school

*Faculty, staff, and administrators*
- All faculty + select staff and administrators (733)
- Tenure track faculty (331)
- 68% response rate (N = 226)
- Representative?
How much do students and faculty value GenEd?

**Measures of Value**

Importance of potential benefits (0-5 scale)

- Gain knowledge and skills for career
- Develop skills for life-long learning
- Prepare to participate as an educated citizen
- Deepen understanding of human experience
- Enhance ability to serve as a leader

GenEd is essential to a TCNJ education
Students and faculty rank importance of benefits the same (p < 0.05)

Faculty rate importance of benefits higher than students (p < 0.001)
How much do students and faculty value GenEd?

Measure of Value
Importance of potential benefits (0-5 scale)
- Gain knowledge and skills for career
- Develop skills for life-long learning
- Prepare to participate as an educated citizen
- Deepen understanding of human experience
- Enhance ability to serve as a leader

GenEd is essential to a TCNJ education
I consider Liberal Learning an essential part of my TCNJ education.

$p < 0.001$

87%

47%
Student perceptions of essentiality differ among schools (p < 0.001)

Average essentiality score

Strongly agree

N = 56

Humanities and Social Sciences

N = 35

Business

N = 21

Arts & Communication

N = 19

Nursing, Health and Exercise Science

N = 35

Education

N = 26

Science

N = 13

Engineering

School

p = 0.034

p = 0.014

Strongly disagree
How much do students and faculty value GenEd?

Measure of Value
Importance of potential benefits (0-5 scale)
- Deepen understanding of human experience
- Prepare to participate as an educated citizen
- Develop skills for life-long learning
- Gain knowledge and skills for career
- Enhance ability to serve as a leader

GenEd is essential to a TCNJ education

Measures do not change as students complete more of GenEd program ($r_s < 0.14$).
Perceptions of Value - Summary

1. Faculty place a greater value on general education than do students.
2. Faculty and students have the same ranking of the value of different benefits.
3. Students from different schools perceive the value of general education differently.
4. Student perceptions of the value of general education do not increase as they compete additional courses.
1. Faculty place a greater value on general education than do students.
2. Faculty and students have the same ranking of the value of different benefits.
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Avenues for Communicating Value?

1. Work with 2-3 others.
2. Generate a list of avenues of communication used by your institutions.
3. Generate grand list.
4. How effective do you think each avenue is?
On campus

GenEd courses

Advising

Academic Requirements Reports

Curricular Structure of GenEd

Web page

Prospects

Orientation

Alumni

Admits
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I consider Liberal Learning an essential part of my TCNJ education.

87% who strongly agree
47% who agree
10% neither agree nor disagree
13% who disagree
2% who strongly disagree

p < 0.001
Thank You!

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Email me for copy of presentation