General Education Survey 2012:

Professional Advisor,

Teaching Faculty & Students

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Introduction and Executive Summary

General Education Program at OU

General education (GE) is the core curriculum for the first two years of undergraduate education at OU. The GE program is intended to introduce students to broad spectrum of interest and disciplines with the overall goal to be well-rounded and developed graduates with problem solving, critical thinking, and leadership skills. In order to meet this goal, students are required to complete a total of 40 credits in over 300 approved GE courses. These courses are divided in to a three part structure (Foundation, Exploration, and Integration) with two areas of development (Writing Intensive and U.S. Diversity) which are divided in to 10 knowledge areas intended to complement the student's major area of study. Specific descriptions of all areas can be found in Appendix A. These areas of study are as follows:

"Our major classes are more applicable, but were it not for things like general education course a university is no better than a trade school."

Student comment

General Education Survey at OU

During the 2011-2012 academic year - the GE committee administered a survey to faculty, advising staff, and students asking about impressions, satisfaction with, and goals of the GE program at OU. Academic advisors (N=18), teaching faculty (N=119); and students (N=1510) were surveyed regarding their observations and opinions of the General Education program and its requirements. A summary of the results is as follows:

Professional Advisors

18 academic advisors were surveyed regarding their perception of challenges faced by students in regards to the General Education requirement.

Advisors report students appear to be repeating classes in Formal Reasoning (n=10); knowledge exploration (n=9) – specifically Natural Science and Technology (n=4), Social Sciences (n=3), and Foreign Language and Culture (n=2); math (n=1); Capstone (n=1); and Knowledge Application (n=1) most often. Classes most frequently resulting in DFWI for the student are Formal Reasoning (n=8); Natural Science and Technology (n=3); math (n=1); Foreign Language and Culture (n=1); Social Science (n=1) and Literature (n=1). Of note, there was a particular comment asking "What is DFWI?". The classes that students are having the most difficulty fulfilling are specifically writing classes (WRT360, WRT365, and WRT386) as well as the literature requirement based on the time it is offered. A summary of comments can be seen in Tables 1 and 2

Table 1: What would help facilitate your role as advisor? (N=10)

Comment

"Better course desriptions (sic) would be helpful. The wording in the catalog is confusing for students and new staff when it reads (Also fulfills Social Science) for categories that cannot be doublecounted (sic). Diversity and Writing Intensive in Gen Ed are the only"

"better understand GESLOS"

"Having policies regarding exceptions in writing. We have seen verbal policies change when the GEC Chair changed."

"If our students don't double-count something for WIGE then it adds four credits to our degree as we have no free electives. Offering courses that double-count for Writing Intensive and Literature that are offered in the evening and summer would help …"

"It would be great to learn more about what is required in the gen ed course (more than the course description)"

"Possibility of reviewing the 2nd degree section for students who receive their degree from a non-regionally accredited institution. If we require student who earn their degrees from international institution to provide the university with an ECE …"

"Simplifying the categories and requirements"

"Take the mystery out of MACRAO"

"The document outlining area requirements and outcomes, recently presented at PAC is extremely helpful. A quicker review process for transfer credits would be helpful"

"The guides to Gen Ed you provided at our PAC meeting were helpful."

Table 2: Additional advisor comments

Comment

"Bi-lingual students should excempt (sic) students from foreign language and culture requirement. Could sign language be added to foreign language and culture?"

"I appreciate the turn-around time for most petitions of exception. Thank you!"

"OU's Gen Ed doesn't seem like a true Gen Ed because so much double-counting between the Gen Ed coursework and the Major requirements is necessary for students to complete their degrees in a timely manner. This is especially a problem for students who ..."

"Should consider simplifying...new general education is much too confusing/complicated need to go back to similar format of old general education."

"Thank you for including us in this survey.   In one of the previous question regarding categories where there is a lack of course offerings - one suggestion Under -Foreign Language and Culture - is there any discussion to consider Sign Language as a ..."

"The Gen Ed Committee is doing a really great job, we appreciate you attending a PAC meeting'

"The separate Writing Intensive requirement categories for major and Gen Ed are often confusing to students. Perhaps there could just be one list of Writing Intensive requirements, and students would need to select two."

"Transfer students are unfairly treated with current policies. They are forced to take general education courses at OU."

Teaching Faculty

119 teaching faculty were surveyed regarding their perception of challenges faced by students in regards to the General Education requirement and their opinions on the success of the General Education goals.

Faculty (N=29) feel as though as though formal reasoning (n=13, 68%), foreign language (n=2, 67%), global perspectives (n=6, 50%), literature (n=4, 80%), natural science/technology (n=10, 71%), social science (n=13, 76%) and western civilization (n=5, 100%) all satisfactorily prepare their students. However, the Writing General Education requirement does not prepare their students very well (n=19; 66%). See Table 3 for detailed response rates.

Table 3: How well do you feel that each of the General Education areas prepares your students?

General Education Area	Response		
	Not well	Satisfactorily	Very well
Writing (N=29)	**19**	9	1
Formal Reasoning (N=19)	6	**13**	0
Social Science (N=17)	1	**13**	3
Natural Science/Technology (N=14)	1	**10**	3
Global Perspectives (N=12)	4	**6**	2
Western Civilization (N=5)	0	**5**	0
Literature (N=5)	1	**4**	0
Foreign Language/Culture (N=3)	1	**2**	0

Writing
Faculty reports that students have difficulty "articulating reasoned arguments" in their writing assignments. They struggle with the basic structure of a paper and writing in a way that is concise and coherent. Students are turning in papers and assignments with slang and texting abbreviations and do not seem prepared to communicate through academic or professional writing. Students have reported to faculty they spend very little time on writing assignments and generally consider some General Education classes "blow off" classes and therefore, put forth minimal effort. Students also have ongoing significant issues with using proper grammar and spelling.

Formal Reasoning
Some students lack formal reasoning skills and have difficulty making connections and critically examining material in their coursework. Many students "merely quote back" and "just want facts to memorize and apply". They struggle with making formal logical arguments and are unable to determine which details are relevant and how to apply them through formal reasoning and/or critical thinking .

Social Science
"Most likely, as other departments, students are somewhat naïve about social interactions. Maybe due to lack of meaningful community service or involvement activities."

Natural Science/Technology
Students are reporting to faculty that classes in this area are very difficult and focus on "recognition/regurgitation of facts" and not how to apply to other areas of study. Students and

faculty feel as though some of these classes are being taught as "weed out classes" instead of broadening the student's learning experience. The applied use of available technologies such as Skype, Google documents, Dropbox, etc. would greatly benefit students.

Global Perspectives
Students are quite ethnocentric and benefit greatly from classes that expand their perspectives and awareness of global issues. Some students do not seem to be connected to the world while others bring a diverse element to classroom discussions based on their varied perspectives. While some students take this requirement begrudgingly, it becomes a benefit and asset for them.

Western Civilization
"Many students do come to class without an understanding of how the US Government is set up."

Literature
Students are not well-versed in classical or world literature and it is unclear how they contribute to the critical or creative thinking element of General Education.

Foreign Language/Culture
Students may have professional situations where communication with non-English speaking individuals and this is a challenge for our students. "Students have vague notions of culture, social justice, and the implications of systemic and individual inequality."

CLASS CONTENT AND DEVELOPMENT
Faculty has made changes to their courses based on outcomes of the assessment process. Notably, the writing department has evaluated some of their courses and made the syllabus and learning objectives consistent across syllabi and faculty teaching – which includes a diverse adjunct staff. Courses are being examined to ensure they are student centered and include more hands-on activities to facilitate learning and active participation. Faculty state they have changed the textbook and homework assignments to better reflect SLO's when found that students were not doing well in a particular area. Content areas have been emphasized as needed including bringing in guest lecturers, altering instruction techniques, and changed tests to assignments demonstrating an application of the learned material.

Table 4: Summary of Questions Asked of Teaching Faculty

Question	Responses	
	Yes	No
Have you made changes to your Gen Ed course because of the assessment results? (N=44)	20	**24**
Do you engage your students outside of class, other than regular office hours? (N=109)	**73**	36
Do you require your students to do research in your course? (N=68)	**34**	**34**
Was the submission and approval process easy to follow? (N=23)	**14**	9
With regards to the General Education Program, would you find faculty development helpful? (N=67)	31	**36**

Faculty are engaging their students in diverse ways to incorporate learning objectives in a variety of areas and applications – including research activities. Many faculty serve on committees at OU and play an active role in advising students and helping them to get as much as they can from their educational experiences. Interaction inside and outside the classroom is an important way OU

faculty engage with their students. Faculty are also using technologies such as Moodle forums, classroom Twitter accounts, Facebook pages, Skype, online discussion boards and email to keep students in touch with them and the course. Many report an "open door" policy even outside of posted office hours.

Table 5: Strengths of the General Education curriculum: Themes identified (N=68)

Exposure to new areas and disciplines (n=23)
Sub themes:
- *Provides an interdisciplinary learning experience*
- *Takes students out of their comfort zones*

Providing a foundation for future classes and/or life after OU (n=17)
Sub themes:
- *Helps students develop critical skills*
- *Preparing students*

Producing a well-rounded student/educational experience (n=17)
No strengths (n=5)
Sub themes:
- *No coherence across disciplines*
- *Does not benefit all majors esp. engineering*
- *Question validity of the curriculum*

Related to who is teaching (n=4)
Sub themes:
- *Forces professors to evaluate their own teaching/curriculum*
- *Standardization across disciplines and sections*

Many faculty require a research component in their courses. Students are being asked to complete literature reviews, case studies, access databases, interviews, online research of companies or institutions, intensive library work, on-line debates, and surveys as part of their assignments.

COMPUTING FACILITIES

Faculty were asked their opinion on the available computing facilities (N=68) and 66% (n=45) felt as though the facilities are sufficient. However, comments reveal that the small size of the classrooms is a limitation in incorporating computer lab and computer required assignments and/or course content.

SUBMISSION AND APPROVAL PROCESS

Faculty find the submission and approval process daunting and confusing when first approaching – however, they have been able to navigate the website and successfully submit courses for approval. Some faculty feel as though the process is overly bureaucratic and that expectations at assessment time are not clear. Examples of what is required at submission and approval would be greatly appreciated to clarify what should be included as to avoid lengthy "back and forth" between the faculty and committee.

As can be seen in Table 4, 54% of faculty surveyed feel as though the use of faculty development to better prepare and assist faculty not necessary or helpful. However, comments indicate that use of faculty development could provide a better understanding of the requirements and process. Additionally, this type of approach could help in working with faculty to develop ways to teach General Education courses in a way that benefits the student in an interdisciplinary manner versus teaching for majors. New faculty could benefit from learning what the General Education

curriculum entails for both students and faculty – as well as feeling as though they gain some clarity from the committee in regards to what they are looking for when classes are submitted for approval or assessment.

Table 6: Weaknesses of the General Education curriculum: Themes identified (N=109)

Classes are not meeting the goals set forth in the catalog/SLO's (n=25)

Sub themes:
- *Writing classes are weak*
- *Admission standards are low*
- *Courses are too easy; don't have high standards to pass*
- *Large class size does not engage the student*

Students and/or faculty do not see or understand the importance of a General Education curriculum (n=23)

Sub themes:
- *Don't understand how courses are related to their major*
- *Students see the classes as "blow off" classes*

The General Education committee (n=22)

Sub themes:
- *Serving special interests*
- *Process for course approval and/or assessment is cumbersome/confusing*
- *Assessment schedule is too frequent/difficult to keep track of*
- *Submission website is confusing/difficult to navigate*
- *Requirements restrict instructor choices and/or creativity*
- *Questionable goals/SLO's*

Burden to students and/or faculty (n=11)

Sub themes:
- *Requirements for faculty burden their already heavy teaching schedules*
- *Classes take away from student areas of major study*

Students have difficulty understanding the General Education requirements/schedule, etc. (n=5)

Table 7: Teaching Faculty recommendations (N=82)

Approval & assessment process (n=35)

Sub-themes:
- *Allow programs more autonomy & authority over Gen Ed classes for their students*
- *Does the assessment process evaluate whether or not the classes are meeting their goals?*
- *Workshops about the submission/assessment process*
- *Speed up the approval process*
- *Simplify*

Promotion of the General Education Program and its importance & relevance to majors (n=13)

Sub-themes:
- *Make it "glamorous" to students and faculty*
- *Promote with the faculty*

General Education Curriculum (n=26)

Sub-themes:
- *Cooperation between schools to bring a strong interdisciplinary focus to the curriculum*
- *Review the effectiveness of the writing classes*
- *More focus on critical thinking skills*

Students

1510 students were surveyed asking about their General -Education classes and their opinions of these classes and the program in general. 828 students surveyed identified themselves as entering Oakland University as a first-time college student while 675 were transfer students. Students were asked not only what classes they had completed, but how well they felt these classes contributed to their development in the four key competencies: critical thinking, information literacy, effective communication, and social awareness. The results can be seen in Table 8.

Table 8: Student Perception of Contribution to Competencies by General Education Requirement

General Education Class(es) Completed & Competencies	% of surveyed students	Contribution				
		Not at all	2	3	4	Quite a lot
Writing Foundations (N=952)	63%					
• Critical Thinking (n=858)		73	154	231	262	138
• Information Literacy (n=858)		57	138	257	297	109
• Effective Communication (n=858)		81	161	255	258	103
• Social Awareness (n=858)		73	143	223	276	143
Formal Reasoning (N=790)	52.3%					
• Critical Thinking (n=708)		61	118	179	230	120
• Information Literacy (n=708)		44	109	208	248	99
• Effective Communication (n=708)		66	131	212	211	88
• Social Awareness (n=708)		58	114	180	235	121
Arts (N=867)	57.4%					
• Critical Thinking (n=787)		70	135	202	249	131
• Information Literacy (n=787)		52	125	231	272	107
• Effective Communication (n=787)		79	139	238	233	98
• Social Awareness (n=787)		71	123	193	258	142
Foreign Language and Culture (N=905)	59.9%					
• Critical Thinking (n=814)		73	138	227	256	120
• Information Literacy (n=814)		55	122	250	287	100
• Effective Communication (n=814)		82	135	253	247	97
• Social Awareness (n=814)		69	122	217	271	135
Global Perspectives (N=815)	54%					
• Critical Thinking (n=734)		69	130	177	232	126
• Information Literacy (n=734)		47	117	215	251	104
• Effective Communication (n=734)		73	134	218	219	90
• Social Awareness (n=734)		59	113	184	241	137
Literature (N=792)	52.5%					
• Critical Thinking (n=713)		65	107	184	230	127
• Information Literacy (n=713)		48	102	199	257	107
• Effective Communication (n=713)		66	118	226	211	92
• Social Awareness (n=713)		62	105	170	245	131
Natural Science and Technology (N=833)	55.2%					
• Critical Thinking (n=747)		63	132	196	238	118
• Information Literacy (n=747)		51	118	222	260	96
• Effective Communication (n=747)		74	138	220	227	88

• Social Awareness (n=747)		57	119	197	250	124
Social Science (N=875)	57.9%					
• Critical Thinking (n=772)		67	135	197	247	126
• Information Literacy (n=772)		51	118	235	264	104
• Effective Communication (n=772)		79	136	241	229	87
• Social Awareness (n=772)		63	122	199	262	126
Western Civilization (N=788)	52.2%					
• Critical Thinking (n=716)		62	124	190	224	116
• Information Literacy (n=716)		46	114	209	248	99
• Effective Communication (n=716)		70	129	224	210	83
• Social Awareness (n=716)		58	116	176	242	124
Knowledge Application (N=640)	42.4%					
• Critical Thinking (n=577)		49	95	155	172	106
• Information Literacy (n=577)		36	92	172	183	94
• Effective Communication (n=577)		55	107	168	165	82
• Social Awareness (n=577)		46	87	142	192	110
Capstone (N=364)	24.1%					
• Critical Thinking (n=324)		34	53	85	109	43
• Information Literacy (n=324)		23	55	101	102	43
• Effective Communication (n=324)		31	58	99	99	37
• Social Awareness (n=324)		28	47	81	114	54
U.S Diversity (N=706)	46.8%					
• Critical Thinking (n=632)		56	109	152	200	115
• Information Literacy (n=632)		48	95	178	213	98
• Effective Communication (n=632)		64	107	193	186	82
• Social Awareness (n=632)		54	90	155	218	115
WIGE (N=658)	43.6%					
• Critical Thinking (n=590)		48	107	151	185	99
• Information Literacy (n=590)		37	90	179	200	84
• Effective Communication (n=590)		58	105	169	183	75
• Social Awareness (n=590)		47	95	144	200	104
WIM (N=505)	33.4%					
• Critical Thinking (n=451)		51	74	118	138	70
• Information Literacy (n=451)		34	73	142	138	64
• Effective Communication (n=451)		48	90	127	131	55
• Social Awareness (n=451)		38	76	109	154	74

Availability of General Education Courses

Students were asked if they had difficulty finding courses to complete General Education requirements (N=655) with 28.3% (n=428) reporting there were no sections open; 22.4% (n=338) there were no available sections to fit their schedule; 21.6% (n=326) all sections were full; and 10.5% (n=158) stating there were no classes offered.

Additional comments reveal that students feel that at times there will only be one section open for a class, an in particular KA classes - which significantly impacts their ability to plan their schedules. Advisors have informed students they can't take some General Education classes because they weren't majoring in the class they wanted to take or were misinformed about classes needed to

fulfill the General Education requirements. Students struggle to understand the need for General Education classes and younger students in particular feel they are a repeat of high school and a waste of their time with no value outside of the classroom. Students feel the inability to fulfill a requirement due to availability of General Education classes could potentially delay graduation.

Understanding the General Education Requirement/Program

Students were asked how well they think the instructors in their General Education courses make clear to you the General Education student learning outcomes expected. A total of 1314 students responded with the following results: 32.5% felt it was made somewhat clear (n=491); 24.6% neither clear nor unclear (n-372); 19.3% very clear (n=291); 7.7% somewhat unclear (n=117); and 2.8% not clear at all (n=43).

When asked how well students feel the advisors make clear to them the General Education requirements for graduation (N=1400) 30.5% of them felt that advisors made the requirements very clear (n=461); 25.5 felt the requirements were somewhat clear (n=390); 17.2% neither clear nor unclear (n=260); 12.5% somewhat unclear (n=189); and 6.6% felt the requirements were not made clear at all (n=100).

Figure 1: Understanding how General Education relates to Major (N=1256)
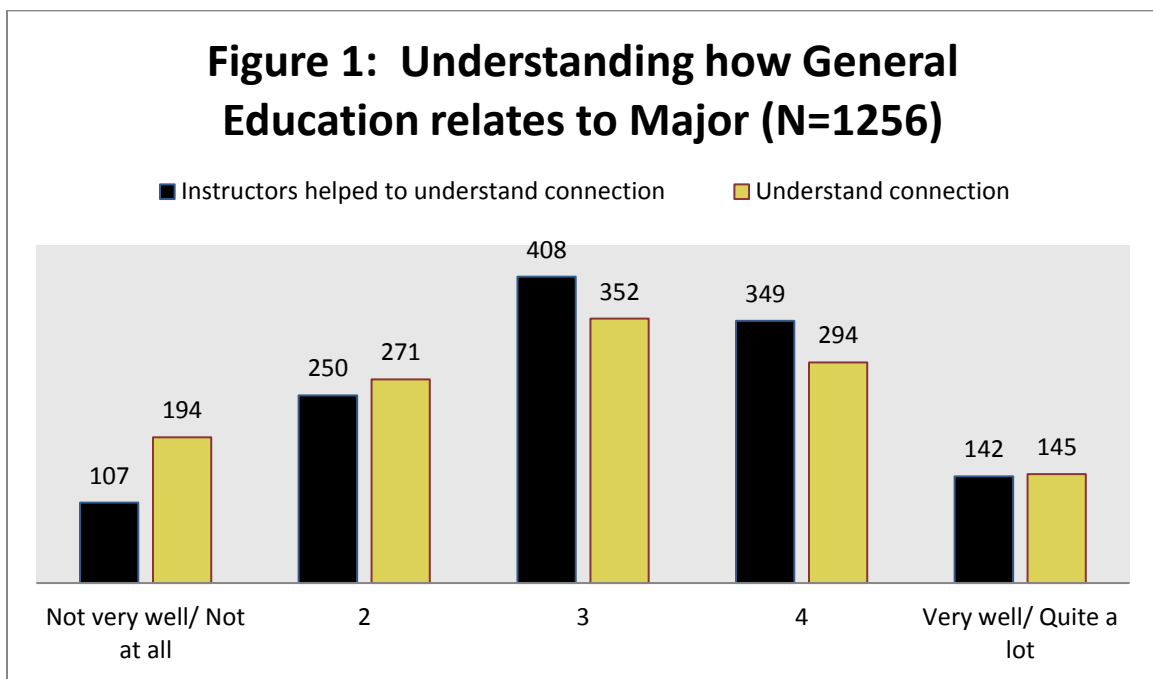
When asked if students (N=1256) understand how General Education courses contribute to their major area of study, 23.3% (n=352) responded neutral – indicating there neither a strong understanding or a strong disconnect between the General Education requirements and the student's majors. 19.5% (n=294) feel they do somewhat understand the connection while 17.9% (n=271) do not somewhat understand. 12.8% (n=194) do not understand the connection very well at all while 9.6% (n=12.8%) understand very well.

When asked how much they felt their OU instructors contributed to their understanding of how General Education courses relate to their major and 27% (n=408) of students feel the instructors neither contributed or lacked contribution to their understanding. 23.1% (n=349) while felt that

instructors did contribute some; 16.6% (n=250) felt they didn't contribute much; 9.4% (n=142) felt they contributed quite a lot while 7.1% (n=107) felt not at all.

What students think about General Education

Students were asked: *What do you think the purpose of a General Education curriculum should be?* There were a total of 1567 comments examined. Overwhelmingly, the students feel that the General Education curriculum is to produce a well-rounded graduate (n=503). They feel that the curriculum lends to students getting a good foundation (n=261) for their upper level courses, major-related courses, and for their future careers (n=113). There is also an expectation that classes in the General Education curriculum act as a way for students to explore (n=261) areas outside their major, to find an area of interest they can major in, or to just take classes they are interested in.

When asked directly *How much have the General Education courses you took at OU contributed to your range of knowledge?* There were a total of 1256 students who responded with the following results: 28.5% felt the General Education requirements contributed to their range on knowledge quite a lot (n=431); 23.2% in the middle (n=350); 14% quite a lot (n=271); 12.3% a little (n=186); and 4.8% not at all (n=72).

However, a good portion of students feel as though the General Education curriculum should be directly related to their major (n=140) and that classes that are not tied to their major are a waste of time and/or money (n=81). Some students feel that General Education classes should be offered at a discount since they are required (n=10) for graduation and that these classes are perceived as a way for OU to increase revenue. There is some concern that General Education classes are a repeat of high school classes (n=17) and rather, the classes should be a transition (n=15) between high school and college. Some students are also concerned that the classes are too hard (n=5) for General Education classes and see them as a way to bring their GPA down. A summary of all themes identified can be reviewed in Table 10.

Table 9: Summary of all Student Comments: Themes Identified (N=2368)

The purpose of the Gen-Ed program is to produce a "well-rounded" education or student (n=516)
Sub-themes:
- Provide a general knowledge of things outside their major
- Provide a general understanding of the world
- Provide a solid knowledge base for a variety of subjects
- Gain different perspectives

Should relate directly to my major (n=227)
Sub-themes:
- Should be specific courses or Gen. Ed. paths for specific majors or "major specific" Gen-Ed programs
- Would be helpful if some courses double-counted towards major and Gen. Ed.
- Taking Gen. Ed classes hindered ability to focus on major classes

Should provide a foundation to prepare me for my major and/or future classes (n=277)
Sub-themes:
- Develop necessary skills

Should prepare me for my career and/or life after college (n=133)
Sub themes:

- Learn transferable skills
- Learn skills that can be used in life and the workplace
- Become socially and politically aware in order to be a positive contribution to society

Should help explore areas outside of major (n=289)

Sub-themes:
- Should not be required if major has already been decided or declared
- Should help to determine major if undecided
- Broaden student horizons
- Introduce students to new areas they may have not otherwise been exposed to
- Expand and exposure to knowledge in different areas
- Learn outside of comfort zone

Act as a transition between high school and college (n=15)

Sub-themes:
- Introduce new students to college life
- Assess where students are at

Repeat of high school (n=31)

Sub-themes:
- Same classes and content covered in HS
- Gen-ed classes seem to be geared towards recent HS graduates
- Frustrating and borderline patronizing to older students

Requirement of OU (n=40)

Sub-themes:
- Get in to major area of study
- Forced to take

Waste of time and money (n=203)

Sub-themes:
- Way for OU to get more money
- Way for departments to promote themselves
- Ridiculous or unnecessary
- We should be able to work right in to our majors (especially expressed by the engineering students)
- Should only be required for those who are undecided on a major
- Repetitive

Gen Ed specific comments/suggestions

Sub-themes:
- Good the way it is now
- Transfer policy is frustrating
- MACRO program/policy has been very beneficial
- Should be broadcast as something positive rather than just a requirement that needs to be fulfilled.
- Hard to get in to class you want sometimes because of schedule or when it is offered
- Get rid of it
- "Assesment (sic) testing should be conducted to give students a chance to "test out" of these un-necessary classes"
- Offer more online classes to accommodate non-traditional or working students
- Don't think Foreign Language should be required
- Gen-Eds should be cheaper

Gen-Ed requirements are too much (n=24)

Sub-themes:
- Pre-requisites difficult to complete
- Two years of classes is too much
- Too much required for foreign language

<mark>Faculty related comments/suggestions</mark>

Sub-themes:
- Need more diverse faculty
- Quality of the course is directly related to who is teaching it

<mark>Faculty related comments/suggestions</mark>

Sub-themes:
- Professors don't seem to care about the classes or students
- Professors hate teaching the classes as much as students hate taking them
- Class is just to fulfill a requirement – students and faculty reflect a lack of seriousness and effort because of this
- Faculty was enthusiastic – but understood everyone would not share this enthusiasm because of class being a Gen Ed.
- Some faculty make the Gen Ed class/requirement an unpleasant experience
- Difficult to understand some non-native English speaking professors
- Professors cancel a lot of classes

<mark>Course related comments/suggestions</mark>

Sub-themes:
- GE Class schedule and listing should be more structured to make it easier for students to schedule their classes
- Add more sections
- Allow capstone to be taken earlier
- American Sign Language, COM 114 & COM 115 should count as the foreign language requirement
- Best classes I took at OU
- Courses should be able to count for more than one criteria
- Some classes seem to meet Gen Ed requirements but don't count

<mark>Course related comments/suggestions</mark>

Sub-themes:
- OU requires many more classes than other universities
- Some courses seem unnecessary
- Some of the courses are redundant
- Issues with math department
- Courses are irrelevant
- Classes are too large

<mark>Advisor related comments (n=14)</mark>

Sub-themes:
- Advisors not helpful
- Advisors gave bad advice which delayed graduation

<mark>Gen-Ed classes are too easy (n=10)</mark>

Sub-themes:
- Courses didn't challenge or motivate me; too easy

<mark>Gen-Ed classes are too hard (n=24)</mark>

Sub-themes:
- Too hard for 100 level or GE classes

- Gen Ed classes brought my GPA down

Gen-Ed classes are boring (n=6)

Gen-Ed schedule (n=16)

Sub-themes:
- More classes offered
- More times offered for non-traditional students
- More online classes offered
- Need more of a variety of classes offered

Direct quotes

"I am grateful for the rich and meaningful experiences that OU General Education has provided me."

"There should be more weight put on general education, more than half of a BA in my opinion. Trade schools can help people who only want to have a job or know about one thing. Universities should be about creating or honing the next generation of thinkers."

"I believe that there are many classes that should fulfil (sic) General Education areas that don't. For example, MTH 141 and MTH 155 are far more challenging than MTH 118 and MTH 121, yet don't meet the General Education requirement for Formal Reasoning."

"I have never wasted more money in my life learning about stuff i can find on Google. These classes claim to develop "well rounded" students" and clearly fails at achieving that"

"There is far too much emphasis placed on, and time spent in, general education."

"I really think inter-disciplinary thinking is very important in a college education and should be promoted more"

"I think many of the professors of the gen ed courses need to realize that the majority of students in their classes have no real interest in the subject and are there because they are required"

"I think that a prior learning assessment for life and/or work experience should be available, especially for older students"

"I think there are enough Gen Eds at OU and most of my peers agree. When the University adds on more, we automatically assume it is just for the profit of the school and not for the education of the students"

"So the professors teaching the classes can tell us themselves it's a waste of our time? That's my experience."

"There so be gen Ed. For the just major that start you write into the major, we went to high school for gen Ed. College is for a career not a high school."

"To give students a well rounded knowledge and skills base that supplements theirs studies in a specialized area and prepares them to benefit the workplace and society."

Findings & Discussion

The General Education survey administered to teaching faculty, advising staff, and students garnered 1647 responses. These individuals provided us with over 2600 comments and suggestions which reveal a broad opinion of the general education program at OU. Opinions were also shared about those who teach, advise, and participate in the general education program in various roles.

Overall, there is an understanding among those surveyed the worth and purpose of a Gen Ed program. Some areas of strength noted:

- There is an understanding and appreciation for the Gen Ed program goals and purposes of providing a well-rounded education to OU students by all those surveyed.

> "There should be more weight put on general education, more than half of a BA in my opinion. Trade schools can help people who only want to have a job or know about one thing. Universities should be about creating or honing the next generation of thinkers."   *Student comment*

- 60% of teaching faculty feels as though Gen Ed courses in the seven core areas of Arts, Foreign Language and Culture, Global Perspectives, Literature, Natural Science and Technology, Social Science, and Western Civilization satisfactorily prepare students. Over 50% of students feel as though the Gen Ed requirement at OU contributed to their overall competencies in the same areas. This demonstrates that a majority of both faculty and students feel as though Gen Ed curriculum courses contribute to their ability to succeed at OU through preparation and enhancement of competencies.
- There is a parallel between teaching faculty and student perception of the Writing Foundations requirement. 58% of teaching faculty feels as though students are poorly prepared for their upper level classes by the Gen Ed writing courses, and 52% of students feel they are very well prepared for upper level writing. This even division is one area where students and faculty perceive an area in similar manners. This is considered a strength because regardless of the positive or negative tone of the question, around half of both students and faculty feel as though students are well prepared by the Writing Foundations requirement. This is a good starting point for examining other areas where student and faculty may seem opposed, but with examination – actually perceive the issue in similar ways. This revelation can be of utmost advantage when planning future efforts to improve perception as well as performance in these areas.

This positive support for the Gen Ed program is seen throughout the advisor and faculty responses as well. However, growth comes from not only analyzing strengths, but weaknesses as well. While there is an understanding on the worth of the Gen Ed program, there remain some areas of weakness that need to be addressed by the Gen Ed committee and OU in order to improve awareness and understanding of the purpose and goals of the Gen Ed program. Some areas for improvement include:

- Students feel as though they shouldn't be required to take classes outside their major or take Gen Ed courses if they know what their major will be. 21% of faculty feel as though students and/or faculty do not see or understand the importance of a General Education curriculum and that students see the classes as "blow off" classes

  > "Transfer students are unfairly treated with current policies. They are forced to take general education courses at OU."   *Academic Advisor comment*

  > "There so be gen Ed. For the just major that start you write into the major, we went to high school for gen Ed. College is for a career not a high school."   *Student comment*

  This demonstrates a need for education at the individual and university level as similar comments and responses were noted across all respondents.

- There is a general negative connotation to the Gen Ed curriculum and requirements. 16% of teaching faculty feels as though there should be a positive promotion of the Gen Ed program and its importance and relevance to all majors. 9% of students feel as though Gen Ed courses are a waste of time and money and are seen as a way for the university to generate income.

  > "I think many of the professors of the gen ed courses need to realize that the majority of students in their classes have no real interest in the subject and are there because they are required"   *Student comment*

  While these numbers are small, they can have large impacts on attitude towards Gen Ed and the student and faculty performance in the classroom.

Gen Ed is a program that every undergraduate student participates in at OU. Faculty and advising staff are challenged to meet the needs of students in a variety of disciplines and at varying levels of their education. The comments and responses provided by faculty, advising staff, and students have provided a window in to these varied experiences and with the findings of this survey, improvements in the current Gen Ed program can be made.

Appendix A

FOUNDATION (one course in each area)
Foundation area courses develop skills students will use in subsequent education.
- Writing Foundations: The area of writing foundations is fulfilled by completion of WRT 160, the only area where students are required to complete a specific course or its equivalent.
- Formal Reasoning: Must be taken by students before junior year and aim to give students the ability to apply formal reasoning skills to read, understand, model and solve problems across a variety of applications, settings, and disciplines.

EXPLORATION (one course in each area)
Exploration area courses provide a critical understanding of the universe, society, and humankind to ensure a well-educated and well-rounded student.

- Arts: Students will gain knowledge of historic artistic traditions and the role of art as a critical commentary on society and expression of experience.
- Foreign Language & Culture: Students will learn a foreign language and culture and the contributions of diverse cultures to global society
- Literature: Students will learn how literature is an expression of culture and will gain knowledge of literary form.
- Global Perspectives: Courses teach knowledge of environments, political systems, economies, societies and religion outside on the United States to teach students the role different cultures play in forming values in other parts of the world.
- Natural Science & Technology: Students are taught about major concepts from natural science and technology, including developing and testing hypotheses, drawing conclusions, and reporting of findings in a scientific setting while learning how to evaluate sources of information in science and technology.
- Social Science: Students are exposed to concepts, methods and theories that enhance understanding of human behavior and learn how to apply these concepts, methods, and theories to problems in society, with individuals, or within institutions.
- Western Civilization: Prepares students to demonstrate knowledge about historical events and philosophical ideas of European and/or American culture and to understand how Western ideas have evolved over time.

INTEGRATION (one course in each area)
Integration area courses provide knowledge of how areas outside a student's major can be used to evaluate and applied to solve problems in a wide range of situations and areas as well as the personal, professional, and societal implications of these applications.

- Knowledge Applications: Courses teach how knowledge in an area outside of the student's major can be applied to solve problems and the personal, professional, ethical, and societal implications of these applications.
- Capstone: Students learn the appropriate use of a variety of methods of inquiry and develop the ability to recognize ethical considerations of these methods of inquiry while having the ability to integrate these skills as relevant to the student.

WRITING INTENSIVE
Writing intensive courses give students an understanding of the depth of both general and discipline-specific writing abilities.

U.S. DIVERSITY
U.S. Diversity courses provide students with a knowledge and appreciation of the history, strengths, and challenges of the diversity found in the United States.