General Education @ PSU

Academic Leadership Forum
February 3, 2017
1930’s

The idea of a core curriculum/general education to encourage well-roundedness is introduced at Columbia, Chicago, and Dartmouth.

1954

The first Gen Ed committee at PSU secured the adoption of a 37-credit program to develop “a man’s knowledge and capacities” as opposed to “training for an occupation.”

1985

Baccalaureate Degree Requirements (BDRs) approved in a 46-credit cafeteria that included skills courses and knowledge domains. (Depth and Breadth distinctions were abandoned in 1994.)
1990

Diversity added as a required part of the curriculum

3 credits of Diversity Focused (DF) or 12 credits of Diversity Enhanced (DE)

(DE bookkeeping deemed too complex; eliminated in 1994.)

1997

Senate adopted 10 recommendations proposed by the Special Committee on General Education (charged in Feb. 1996)
10 Recommendations

Develop First-Year Seminars

• small
• discussion-based
• purpose and content defined by college

55% credit hours taught in classes with > 100 students
65% of Gen Ed credit hours taught by full-time faculty

From Special Committee on General Education
10 Recommendations

Introduce diagnostic/adaptive placement

Identify outcomes for mastery of discipline-specific proficiencies to enhance relevancy

Integrate key competencies and active learning into domain courses
  • The Gen Ed curriculum lacked connections to competencies crucial to life and professional career success, so . . .
  • Incorporate writing/speaking, quantitative reasoning, teamwork, critical thinking/problem solving, information gathering, scholarly conduct

From Special Committee on General Education
10 Recommendations

5. Stimulate collaborative/integrative approaches across disciplinary boundaries

6. Restructure Health Science & Physical Education requirement (4 cr. -> 3 cr.)

6-7. Recast Diversity requirement as Intercultural/International Competence emphasizing student engagement (DF->GI)

From Special Committee on General Education
10 Recommendations

8. Allow substitution of 3rd level second-language study

9. Initiate systematic, formative assessment; faculty owned

10. Provide oversight for implementation
   • costing report called for $2M - $4.5M mostly for FYS (#1) and integration of competencies and active learning (#4)

From Special Committee on General Education
Further refinements

2003
- Intercultural/International competence replaced by U.S. cultures (U.S.) and International Cultures (IL)

2008
- FYS replaced by First-year Experience
The Students’ Perspective

Opportunity for exploration/intellectual curiosity

Complementary to the major

Relief from rigor or subject matter of the major

Access to small classes

Anonymity of a large classes
General education is idiosyncratic, tailored to particular institutions and their needs.

Good general education is associated with a culture that values high expectations, recognizes diverse talents and learning styles and emphasizes early engagement.

Good general education promotes coherence and wholeness, interdisciplinary and continuity, integration and synthesis (of instruction, practice, and experience). It encourages active learning and collaboration and a commitment to inquiry beyond the curriculum.

Finally, good general education builds dynamic assessment and improvement into curricular processes.

PennState
Undergraduate Education
2012: A University-wide conversation about Gen Ed began

2013-2015: Gen Ed Task Force deliberates models and makes recommendations

2015-2016: Faculty Senate implementation reports from faculty senate

2016-2017: Formation of Office for General Education and innovative course development announced

Summer/Fall 2018: New requirements start for students
The foremost goal of the Gen Ed revision was to foster opportunities for student learning.
What needs to be done now?

- Implementation of New Requirements
- Assessment
- Recertification of Courses by Curricular Affairs
GenEd Learning Objectives

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

KEY LITERACIES e.g. quantitative, health, intercultural, historical, aesthetic, linguistic, scientific

CRITICAL AND ANALYTICAL THINKING

INTEGRATIVE THINKING

CREATIVE THINKING

GLOBAL LEARNING

SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND ETHICAL REASONING
Foundation Courses
(15 credits and C or better)
Quantification (GQ)
Writing and Speaking (GWS)

Domain Courses
(30 credits includes 6 Integrative Studies credits)
Arts (GA) – 6 credits
Humanities (GH) – 6 credits
Health and Wellness (GHW) – 3 credits
Natural Sciences (GN) – 9 credits
Social and Behavioral Sciences (GS) – 6 credits

Criteria for each foundation and domain area was reviewed, updated, and to some degree made parallel.
Integrative Studies Requirement
6 credits

**Inter-domain Courses**
- 3 credits, students must take 2
- 2 domains represented in each course
- creates 6 credits of exploration in General Education because may count toward both domains

**Linked Courses**
- 2 courses that link in some substantial way
- each course used by a student is designated in a different domain
- may be used toward integrative studies requirement or regular domain course requirement if link is not taken
Everyone has a role

- Administration
- Office for Gen Ed
- Faculty Senate
- Faculty/Staff
- Faculty Fellows
Gen Ed Faculty Fellows

16 FELLOWS TOTAL

7 FROM UNIVERSITY PARK – ONE PER DOMAIN AND FOUNDATION

5 FROM CAMPUS COLLEGES

4 FROM UNIVERSITY COLLEGE REPRESENTING GEOGRAPHIC GROUPS

PARTIAL SUMMER SUPPORT FOR EFFORT
General Education @ PSU

SOLID FOUNDATION

TRANSFORMATIVE EXPLORATION

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING