

Results of the August GenEd Task Force Retreat

The Gen Ed Task Force, joined by several university Faculty Senate councilors and some standing committee members, met for a two-day retreat on August 7 – 8th.

We affirmed that:

1. There is a need to update our general education curriculum, with evidence for this coming from both national research and internal analysis, and
2. It is time to move forward with the process.

The attendees were divided into four working teams, comprised of members of the GETF subcommittees and faculty senators, to discuss four curriculum prototypes that had been proposed. These were considered in terms of:

- student learning outcomes
- faculty support structures that will enable teaching in gen ed
- implications for student degree progress
- implications for departments and budgets

Key conclusions that were made:

1. None of these four models is “the” perfect model for Penn State. There were aspects of each of the four that were attractive opportunities and others that were tradeoffs;
2. Support for faculty, for general education pedagogy, is essential for any general education curricular model to succeed;
3. The curriculum needs to be structured in terms of learning objectives. “Our concern has to be our students; our decisions have to be decided by what furthers student learning” – and the primary structure is *learning objectives*.

At the end of the retreat, two of the working teams identified elements that could be taken, combined and shaped into (one or two) new prototypes for additional deliberation in a format structured in terms of learning outcomes. Some additional data will be gathered and analyses conducted to examine each of the prototypes, to arrive at perhaps three or four models for the University community to deliberate.

The task force plan is to submit an informational report for consideration at the October university faculty senate meeting. It will be made available on-line for comment and input, and the task force plans to hold open faculty meetings at every campus and college in September and early October to facilitate in-person discussion and deliberation. More information on those meetings, the prototypes, and background will be provided at <http://gened.psu.edu>, so we encourage faculty to explore, read the posted materials, and participate in the online forums.