

Campus Conversation on GE
May 16, 2008
Table 13

Table participants: Melina Abdullah, Kim Bishop, Nadia Chiang, Steven Jones, Gretchen Peterson, Gail Washington

Session I

Question 1: In addition to the learning outcomes being proposed in the revised Executive Order 595, what other learning outcomes and/or characteristics do you believe our students should have to prepare them for the 21st century as a result of completing our GE program?

As a result of completing our GE program, students should have developed:

1. knowledge of traditionally underrepresented groups in the U.S.
2. pluralistic thinking
3. cross-cultural literacy
4. familiarity with a language other than English

Question 2: How do we help students develop the enduring habits of mind that facilitate life-long learning?

We can help students develop lifelong learning habits through:

1. using of innovative teaching strategies
2. connecting classroom ideas to live experiences
3. inspiring curiosity
4. infusing basic skills throughout courses on the program – these basic skills include: critical thinking, writing/speaking, problem solving, information competency, cross-cultural literacy

Question 3: How should we educate students to be competent/active citizens in their communities and the nation?

We can educate our students to be active citizens through:

1. facilitating community engagement – this includes using community speakers, engaging in service learning, and incorporating field trips into curricula
2. encouraging students to see themselves as agents of change
3. exposing students to current events
4. connecting world/community events to students' personal experiences
5. encouraging students to participate in extracurricular activities and programs

Question 4: Should the urban distinctiveness of our location be reflected in the GE program and, if so, how?

The urban distinctiveness of our campus should be addressed with the following considerations:

1. Urban distinctiveness is important but our distinctiveness as a campus community goes beyond just the urban setting to include: cultural distinctiveness, ethnic

- distinctiveness, religious distinctiveness, national origin distinctiveness, global distinctiveness, racial distinctiveness, socioeconomic distinctiveness
2. We should acknowledge that urban distinctiveness is not just geographical, but also political and should examine political consciousness, constructs, and structures
 3. Course content should reflect the diversity of LA with attention to traditionally underrepresented groups
 4. Campus community should be opened to encourage involvement of individuals and groups that reflect the diverse richness of LA.

Session II

Question: What can be done in a revised GE program to help students connect and integrate their learning across courses, disciplines, GE blocks, and time?

A revised GE program should consider/address the following issues or ideas:

1. proposals for new GE courses should be accepted at any time rather than during limited time periods
2. while team teaching may be one alternative model of instruction, that model is fraught with both fiscal and pedagogical challenges
3. community engagement should be incorporated into the curricula
4. consideration should be given to different models of learning communities, including (but not limited to): disciplinary communities, thematic communities, identity-based communities, and time availability communities
5. greater investment needs to be made in proper GE advisement
6. investment in writing intensive courses across the curriculum (including writing for different purposes) needs to be initiated and maintained and courses should be capped at 25 students
7. information competency needs to be infused in the curriculum
8. a sense of community needs to be built for the students and this can be facilitated through investments in mentoring of students
9. investments in faculty collaboration need to be made
10. the American Institutions requirement needs to be broadened to include the history and politics of traditionally underrepresented groups
11. faculty need to be consistently and fairly compensated for teaching large GE classes

Campus Conversation on General Education

Group 8

Session 1

A General Question – What assessment activities have been conducted on the current program in general education?

Question 3

There should be an understanding of the process of disciplines.

What is important in terms of content knowledge?

There may be the need for a different approach in the social sciences versus the natural sciences.

Writing across the curriculum is important. There is a need for an integrated model; early and often.

Students need to become proficient in both written and verbal communication.

Reading will help with writing.

Students need to write, speak, think, care, be responsible, see the application, practice, and participate.

Book learning needs to be transferred to application.

Question 4

How does “urban” fit Cal State L.A. more than other campuses of the CSU in suburban areas (CSUN, CSUF, CSUDH, etc)? Are there other terms, like cosmopolitan, that would be better?

Globally connected jobs and diversity as a global aspect, not just an ethnic aspect.

Session 2

Emphasize opportunities to study abroad.

Cohort emphasis on literacy; reading, writing, critical analysis

Common readings

Students should have the opportunity for learning outside of the classroom.

There should be more focus on courses that explore our cosmopolitan nature.

Integrated, theme-based model

There needs to be faculty professional development to deal with construct of general education.

Service Learning and Field Experience

Break down barriers between people.

More “Command-based” model in first year.

More “Market-based” model in second year.

Draw on experience of alumni for benefits of G.E. program.

Reading should be fun!

Roundtable Notes
Campus Conversation on General Education
Friday, May 16, 2008
Table 9: Nancy Hunt, Group Facilitator

SESSION I

Question 1: In addition to the learning outcomes being proposed in the revised Executive Order 595, what other learning outcomes and/or characteristics do you believe our students should have to prepare them for the 21st century as a result of completing our GE program?

1. *The role of knowledge; possession of a broad base of knowledge*
2. *A critical thinking attitude; motivation to engage in critical, careful thought*
3. *Appreciation of knowledge; a valuing of learning and knowledge*
4. *Does a need for measurement/assessment/evaluation limit our ability to define learning outcomes?*

Question 2: How do we help students develop the enduring habits of mind that facilitate life-long learning?

1. *Enhance student self-insight and understanding*
2. *Be role models of critical thinking habits; encourage student motivation to process; be role models of life-long learning*
3. *Create a context where positive habits of mind are valued*
4. *Recognize realistic obstacles to faculty attention/engagement with individual students*
5. *Enhance integration of knowledge (of knowledge learned from different courses); enhance application of basic skills to advanced courses*
6. *Mentoring in the classroom, not just on a one-on-one basis*

7. *Creative, interdisciplinary teaching*

Question 3: sorry, we skipped #3 b/c of time concerns

Question 4: Should the urban distinctiveness of our location be reflected in the GE program and, if so, how?

1. *Greater utilization/integration of Los Angeles community learning resources*
2. *Applying teaching/coursework to community issues/topics*
3. *Recognition of our students' unique qualities and knowledge base in course development, curriculum, and teaching*

SESSION II

Question 1: Are there innovative and creative ways of delivering GE that provide students with the knowledge and skills and other outcomes discussed in Session I while at the same time serving to keep students engaged and excited about learning?

1. *Smaller class sizes*
2. *Facilitate team-teaching and interdisciplinary courses*
3. *Create an engaging learning environment*
4. *Promote student community, student networking*
5. *Promote student-to-student mentoring, cohorts*
6. *Dedicated, designated faculty within colleges who focus on freshmen issues*
7. *First-year seminars (with cohorts combined for special events)*
8. *“Linked” courses, with coordinated content by faculty*
9. *Common core issues/themes/skills reflected in first-year courses*
10. *First-year courses linked to community*
11. *Integrating GE issues into the major; core major courses that focus on utilization of basic skills and emphasize interdisciplinary learning*
12. *Enforce completion of Block A subjects in the first year; provide structure and guidance to students, especially for first-year coursework*
13. *NSS 154 (or equivalent) right away, in the first quarter required for all students*
14. *Improve GE with the goal of serving most people, most of the time*
15. *Emphasis on the interdisciplinary nature of education, the idea of common fate, shared goals among faculty, departments, colleges, the university*

Campus Conversation on GE

Table #4 Notes:

Session II

Prepared by D. Robert DeChaine

Departments of Liberal Studies and Communication Studies

May 20, 2008

- There are multiple modes of content delivery (and gaining knowledge); visual, auditory, tactile, etc. It may be worth exploring nontraditional learning environments and learning formats not limited to reading and writing.
- As a way of mobilizing content, encouraging interdisciplinarity, and providing continuity to GE across LD, UD, or both, it may be useful to focus courses around a specific, significant problem or project—say, global climate change, poverty, racism, etc.
 - For example, poverty can be studied from the standpoint of Biology, Math, Composition, Critical Thinking/Philosophy, Geography, Sociology, Anthropology, Art, History, etc.

- A problem-focused GE curriculum could constitute a first-year LDGE track, a culminating/capstone experience, or all of these.
- It would entail much dialog, collaboration, and long-range planning among participating faculty, Colleges, programs, etc.

This group had two facilitators: Margaret Garcia and Mark Wild

Many members of the group had to leave after Session One, so only session one notes are available.

Session 1 – General responses to all four questions

- Critical thinking (outcome)
- Analyzing (say newspaper)
- Communicate thoughts
- Give arguments pro/con and support claims
- Interdisciplinary communication (vocabulary)
- Design for ESL learners
- Written/oral communication skills (public speaking/presentation – this was something our student representative found very useful)
- Lasting skills/habits applicable beyond college
- Engage in democratic process
- Make informed decisions about participation (for example whether to vote) instead of just tuning out
- Participate in community
- Relevance of subject matter to student's life
- Incorporation of technology/tech literacy
- Group/team collaboration, especially interdisciplinary
- Math – connected to daily life, for example critically reading the newspaper
- Inter-relation versus division of subject disciplines (science - humanities – math)
- Get students interested in learning for its own sake
- GE as a way to explore other areas – once out of school, there is no time for that

Campus Conversation on General Education

May 16, 2008

Notes from Table 7

Carol Blaszczyński, Information Systems
Taylor Dark, Pol Sci

David Diaz, Urban Studies
Jim Garrett, English
Ann Garry, Philosophy
Mike Soldatenko, Chicano Studies

First Impressions

- EO 595
- List of learning objectives too extensive—Could this be consolidated?
- What's wrong with the current GE?
 - Is it really a problem?
 - Given your experience is there something good about GE? Are there things we want to keep?
 - Looks like the standard set of breadth requirements most university's require
 - Small group of students—learning communities a good idea
- This discussion has many purposes:
 - Retention of students
 - Problems with GE—is it working?
 - The divisions in the current model—should be integrative and interdisciplinary
 - Current GE protects categories
 - Not particularly coherent
- Models of CSUEB and IGE much more integrative; coherent and encourages conversation

Enable life-long learning?

- Read more
 - Make reading important to day-to-day life
 - Early and frequent component
 - Impact of reading competency
- Critical thinking
 - Use different content examples—simple transfer of skills
- Model the skills we want students to have
 - How we teach—what we do inside the GE classes
- Service learning—can really be a life-changing experience
- College needs to be about exploration
 - We rush students into majors
 - Students change over time; allow to explore and defer their choice of majors
 - Large unit majors and early choice discourage choice

Competent/active citizens

- Encourage courses that engage current issues
- Use a wide range of media—print media, art, music, fiction, etc.
- Voting
- How do you get students to care?
 - Models again; how we participate in our own communities
 - Issues must be concrete enough

Urban distinctiveness

- Opportunities for service learning
- Students mostly come from this area—concrete questions about their own environment
- Resources here
- Other campuses integrate Los Angeles and the urban environment into curriculum
- Even if we managed to make GE more “local”; need to respond to “global”

Session II

Ideas

- The smorgasbord approach might already address many of these issues: can we simply identify courses that might be integrated into lower division “theme”
- “Speaker bank”—expertise shared amongst courses
- Consideration of workload and use/availability of tenure-track faculty
- Symposia/colloquia model—major course themes that run for the year with focused colloquia attached; would work with the cohort model which already ties students to certain times

Cohort

- Developmental classes; how does it function
- At community colleges they mix developmental and other students but developmental students don’t tend to make it (i.e. not a successful model)
- Needs support
- Bonding?
 - Group activities
 - Need different groups
 - Active learning
- Better for education or better for retention?

Other Issues to Consider

- Funding model
- Change from Quarter to Semester
- Ongoing (not one time only) training for faculty to use innovative teaching strategies and integrate courses
- Use of part-time faculty
- Encouraging full-time faculty involvement

Student Outcomes (Brainstorming)

- learn science, society, and technology (interrelationship of)
- relationship of global and local in 21st century world
- an awareness of what they still don't know; value of active learning
- self-awareness and respect for diversity
- intellectual curiosity
- intellectual humility

Enduring Habits of Mind

- integrating critical reading and writing (A1-A3 sequence)
- critical perspectives on technology (awareness of possibilities and limitations)
- appreciating historical (alternative) methods of storing and accessing knowledge

Competent/Active Citizenship

- to be comfortable and confident with career mobility (adaptability)
- resiliency and a sense of purpose
- skills in long-term goal setting and planning
- competency in multiple languages

Defining Urban Distinctiveness

- all GE classes should create opportunities for sharing of knowledge among students from diverse communities/backgrounds
- having a GE class or classes focus on defining L.A. as a place/space, highlighting
 - diversities within Los Angeles
 - L.A.'s position in regional, national, and global contexts
 - the social, cultural, and environmental/geographical evolution of the city
 - comparing L.A. to other cities

Concrete Course Proposals

- For a first-year 'learning community' sequence:
 - integrate the A1 to A3 requirements into a single, year-long, scaffolded sequence
 - course on science, technology, and society
 - course on the arts and society
 - course on race, ethnicity, and social diversity (also emphasizing social justice)
 - a course on migrations/immigration (in historical context; as a lived experience; in different geographical/regional contexts)

- for the second year, increase student freedom (and responsibility) to choose courses from a set of options
- incorporate several interdisciplinary team-taught classes into GE
- all GE classes should be writing-intensive, and have a low faculty-student ratio, either through small classes or through small discussion sections attached to larger lecture courses (if lecture component is delivered on-line, discussion section should take place on-campus, in-person, led by a faculty instructor)
- GE should incorporate a service-learning component requiring/encouraging students to explore communities other than their own (whether locally, regionally, or through AmeriCorps or study abroad)

Defining Diversity for GE

- ability, disability, impairment
- age
- class (socio-economic inequalities)
- cultural
- gender and sexuality
- historical (the diversity between and present)
- linguistic
- political (ideologies; systems)
- racial/ethnic
- religious
- taste/aesthetic disposition

Notes from Table 2

SESSION I. G.E. LEARNING OUTCOMES

review outcomes for CSULA BA/BS degrees. Then, ask: what is the role of G.E. in meeting these outcomes?

Re-examine current G.E. outcomes (e.g., diversity requirement/designation).

Advisement needs to be an integral part of this process. Students should be taught the 60 hour rule (most greatly exceed their capacity, with work and school). Is IHE doing what we want it to do? Are outcomes apparent?

STAFF support for advisement!

G.E. program should not duplicate what is happening elsewhere (e.g., in high school curriculum; in majors); G.E. does not have to be all things to all people.

Current outcomes are narrowly construed, too tied to FTES; generic; not enough permanent faculty participation.

Application to career/profession of choice should be included [*Editorial comment: this from CCOE Dean. I think that this belies the whole idea of GENERAL education.*]

Quantitative reasoning courses are *not* applied; include real quantitative reasoning information/issues (e.g., mortgage decisions).

The “College Learning” reading (p. 3) has a better list of outcomes – organized as skills, etc.; less incoherent than CSULA program.

Some desired outcomes are extra-curricular, e.g. – facilitate student engagement in community, including global community; service learning; collaborative learning.

As an urban campus, G.E. should focus on L.A. (all of it, not just local neighborhoods); e.g., immigration, urban issues beyond local neighborhoods [*Editorial comment: there is a tension between “branding”—i.e., doing what makes us unique—and offering a classical, liberal arts experience.*]

Issues, not disciplines, should drive curriculum.

Cannot have a “one-size-fits-all” modal (e.g., information literacy—not all students are alike; don’t want to make them take courses they don’t need).

SESSION II. STUDENT ENGAGEMENT AND INTEGRATION

consider student cohorts for G.E., grouped in various ways—e.g., by major, life experience (i.e., returning students), competency (placement test results), theme-based choices (e.g., health, social justice/education, sustainability/environment, globalization).

Student community is important. Build in problem-based, collaborative assignments. [*Editorial note: it was not clear, in the table discussion, that participants were focused on G.E. issues – some of what was discussed was pedagogical.*]

Use high-impact activities to teach community issues.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

There are RTP issues here. Cohorting students (and the like) requires more faculty time and effort – with no reward structure. Release time is not always the best model.

Student Opinion Surveys should be compared to the mean for the course, not for the entire department.

Faculty Development is going to have to be an important piece of this process:

- Interdisciplinary teaching
- Team teaching
- Best practices/professional journals

Remove structural obstacles.

Table #4 responses

GE Campus Conversation

Session I:

1. What learning outcomes and/or characteristics do you believe our students should have to prepare them for the 21st century as a result of completing our GE program?
 - Some advocated technological literacy/skills/knowledge
 - Critical thinking skills emphasized
 - Global awareness as developed through critical thinking and technological literacy/skills/knowledge
 - Connecting students to their lived experiences by emphasizing local/global connections and dialogues
 - Being aware of the ways in which knowledge is produced differently in multiple fields
4. Should the urban distinctiveness of our location be reflected in the GE program and, if so, how?
 - Does this matter to students? Student input on this needed
 - Faculty control of quality necessary
 - Drawing connections from the “urban” experience to larger national/global connections is paramount (historically, politically, culturally, etc)
 - Complicating the definition of “urban” to encompass the local/global relationships