

Question 2. Do you believe General Education in its current form helps students to succeed in coursework in your department's major or minor? Are there ways a Gen Ed curriculum could enhance your students' work in the major so that they meet these AAC&U Learning Outcomes more effectively?

ARTS MANAGEMENT

As noted above improved verbal and written communication skills; the ability to conduct research and write research papers with appropriate citations would enable students to succeed more rapidly in arts management courses. Students also need to become more aware of global customs and issues and how those issues can impact the economic, social and political conditions in their lives.

We congratulate the General Education Committee for taking a new look at this 1998 curriculum and recommend that, if you have not, that you conduct a series of focus groups with students to determine how they would recommend that the college can best help them reach the standards set by the AAC&U.

In moving forward, using the AAC&U's term "Learning Outcomes," rather than General Education Requirements may be more appropriate and appealing to students.

CHEMISTRY

Improved writing and communication skills are needed. This may not be the fault of the current requirements, but might be an indictment of the faculty (both Gen Ed as a whole as well as within the major) and the standards or lack thereof that they impose on meeting those requirements.

Any attempt to guarantee meeting these goals is tempered by the knowledge that there is no "quality control" over the Gen Ed knowledge/skills that transfer students bring with them. The same holds true for AP placement credit which cannot adequately substitute for an equivalent CofC experience.

We also question an emphasis on the development of "collaborative problem-solving skills" within the context of Gen Ed. Once again, this is probably best left to the major. One has to know the fundamentals of the discipline before they can truly be an active, involved, and competent participant in a collaborative effort of substance.

COMMUNICATIONS

Yes, we do. We applaud the many challenging and well-designed courses taught by our faculty colleagues in the general education curriculum. The courses our majors take in mathematics, the sciences, English, sociology, political science, philosophy, the arts, foreign languages and a host of other disciplines contribute substantially to their intellectual development in a host of ways. We are sure that the current general

education curriculum does help our COMM majors succeed as majors and as college graduates. *The question is whether or not that curriculum could be improved.* We would certainly appreciate any changes to the general education curriculum that would enhance the critical thinking, writing, speaking, and research competencies of our students, given the centrality of these competencies to success in the COMM major.

We accept the AAC&U conclusion that faculty and courses in the undergraduate major share the responsibility for general education outcomes with general education faculty and courses. We are open to consideration of changes in the COMM major that would complement reforms in the general education curriculum.

COMPUTER SCIENCE

We believe that overall General Education in its current form successfully complements the various computer science programs by requiring them to obtain a more well-rounded education than many would otherwise choose to obtain.

ENGLISH

The current Gen Ed curriculum is good for our major and minor students in that the coursework orients students to some of the major disciplines or ways of knowing. Interpreting literature includes understanding the historical period and social conditions in which it is set, and raises questions about the human condition that are relevant to all the disciplines represented in Gen Ed (philosophy, religion, art, history, and even science and mathematics). The study of a foreign language helps students be more aware of how any language operates, so that requirement is useful to our majors as well. The scientific method is valuable to our majors because, although literary criticism is not a science, it, too, involves careful study of evidence—in our case, evidence a literary text presents—and the testing of a hypothesis (an interpretation of the meaning of a work of literature) against that evidence. The logic of mathematics and philosophy is also useful to our students, even though imaginative literature does not make meaning in the same strictly logical way. We want our students to be able to write logically and analytically, so if they have had to do this in their Gen Ed courses, they will be more successful in our major. Inasmuch as students are asked to write papers, make presentations, do library research, interpret large and complex written documents, and analyze problems for which there is no one simple answer, they are being asked to grow intellectually, and such students will be able to make greater strides in our major as a result of that rigorous Gen Ed coursework.

Unfortunately, not all Gen Ed coursework is as rigorous as it might be, nor is it always designed to foster students' cognitive development. Gen Ed courses, usually entry-level courses, are not always given the resources and attention that could foster greater learning by the students. When professors teach large classes, they do not have time to grade many (if any) papers or essay exams. They assign fewer of them and respond to the

students' work in much less detail than they would if Gen Ed classes had lower enrollments, and if departments were urged to make the Gen Ed instruction as important as their work in the major (or as important as their department's FTEs).

The large number of adjuncts and temporary instructors teaching Gen Ed courses, and the very poor compensation adjuncts receive, also contributes to the lower quality of instruction and the decreased rigor of the Gen Ed courses. This is not to suggest that adjuncts never teach well; many do. To paraphrase a Tennessee Williams heroine, the College has always depended on the kindness of adjuncts. In our department, there are some temporary faculty whose sustained attention and professional expertise is admirably high. Yet this is not something the College can count on forever. "Too long a sacrifice/Can make a stone of the heart," as W. B. Yeats wrote. The College is inviting low performance and hard hearts when it pays adjuncts at a very low rate and provides them with no benefits or job security. If more of our exemplary adjuncts were full-time instructors, their expertise could be more fully integrated into the department, and both students and faculty would see their work in the Gen Ed curriculum as a high priority of the College, rather than a place where the College can lower its production costs.

HISPANIC STUDIES

The missing link is a relationship to other disciplines outside of Hispanic Studies and our curriculum. We encourage colleagues to motivate students to use their cultural and linguistic knowledge in Spanish about the Spanish-speaking world in other departments/disciplines.

It is suggested that reading knowledge of a foreign language be a requirement at the College and that that requirement be implemented via foreign language readings in specific disciplines.

HISTORY

The General Education curriculum certainly helps to prepare students for their move into the history major. However, we would like to see students come to the history major with better writing, quantitative, and analytical skills. A significant percentage of students do not have the reading comprehension skills necessary to understand primary and secondary sources. As stated above, departments that teach courses in General Education might wish to share their stated course goals and objectives with each other and engage in more collaborative efforts.

MATHEMATICS

a. Do you believe General Education in its current form helps students to succeed in coursework in your department's major or minor?

We believe that our General Education curriculum is valuable and provides an opportunity for our majors to build strong fundamental skills, including good writing skills. We also believe that our General Education curriculum contributes to our majors' overall knowledge, experience, and maturity as students and that certain components of that curriculum provide opportunities for our majors to see how mathematics can be used in other disciplines. However, we believe that our mathematics courses are more critical than our General Education curriculum in our majors' success in subsequent mathematics major courses.

b. Are there ways a Gen Ed curriculum could enhance your students' work in the major so that they meet these AAC&U Learning Outcomes more effectively?

No, not any ways that are apparent to us.

MUSIC

We believe that the General Education Curriculum in its current form at the College is effective in helping our majors and minors succeed in music coursework. This is especially evident in the relationship between the study of Western Civilization (history, philosophy, sociology, economics, literature, etc.) and the development of Western Art Music (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, etc.). Well-educated music students should understand historically significant musical masterpieces and the cultural, political, and artistic environments in which they were written. We also appreciate the fact that many of the courses in the current General Education Curriculum require good writing skills. Music majors often use these skills to write papers in theory and music history classes.

PHILOSOPHY

While a familiarity with other disciplines may help in a philosophy class, what disciplines those are will vary with the content of the particular class. In that sense our major and minor are best served by a population of broadly educated students with strong reading, writing and analytical skills. Since that is the focus of our current General Education requirements, the department is well served by the present, broadly distributed system.

There are, however, some specific General Education requirements that are important to the program in Philosophy. Since almost all philosophy classes require strong writing skills, an English or writing requirement does seem essential to what we do. Our students' work in the major is also enhanced by General Education courses that provide historical, intellectual, and cultural contexts for the topics and figures addressed in philosophy courses. We also regard mathematical logic as an important part of the study of philosophy, and so it is important to us to offer classes in logic which count toward a mathematics/logic requirement

Finally, it is important to note that few students enter college planning to be philosophy majors, since few high schools offer any philosophy courses. Our current system forces all our students to take some extra humanities classes, and often these students are excited about taking philosophy for one or more of these, even if the idea of a philosophy major or minor had never entered their minds. Having these students in our classes does allow us to put that idea forward, often for the first time.

PHYSICS AND ASTRONOMY

We believe GenEd in its current form helps students to succeed in the physics major, although not markedly so. We do appreciate the Gen Ed requirements for our physics majors because it forces them to obtain a more well-rounded education than they would likely choose on their own.

The overall structure and sequencing of the General Education courses is reasonably effective. Any lack of effectiveness is primarily due to a lack of enforcement, for example, students do not take engl101/102 each semester until completed. Even if coerced into enrolling in engl101/102, they can drop the course immediately, with no consequences.

Literary and technical writing are different. Our majors need both. A lower level technical writing course would be helpful.

We would like for students to be advised to take math courses right away. Then students who decide to major in physics would be more prepared and could graduate within 4 years.

POLITICAL SCIENCE

The question focuses the intention of General Education directly onto the wishes of Departments, which denies part of the value of General Education itself: a place to awaken curiosity in a variety of disciplines in order to achieve a broad based knowledge concerning differing modes of inquiry prior to (or in conjunction with) specialized study. We could certainly imagine a General Education program that would be particularly useful and helpful to Political Science students. But such a program would not necessarily be a true General Education program. Instead, what we would hope for would be that connections between disciplines could be made in a direct and enriching way.

PSYCHOLOGY

There was a sense that the major, overall, meets the specified outcomes, although it might improve on Outcome #4. There was some concern that requiring additional courses in

revision of General Education may remove exploration from the course of study within the major. Some faculty expressed the view that students are more “developmentally ready” when they reach, say the Junior year. Perhaps more could be done to allow the goals of general education to be accomplished within the major. The more mature student is likely to be more properly motivated to entertain more abstract concepts and appreciate the coherence of general education and the major. More emphasis then could be placed on writing and communication skills.

RELIGIOUS STUDIES

Overall, RELS faculty concluded that the current form of the Gen Ed requirements do help students to succeed in the Religious Studies major, particularly courses in the humanities, language courses, writing skills taught in English, and analytic skills developed in philosophy, math and sciences. There is a particularly strong connection between RELS courses and courses in history and social sciences, especially anthropology. Certain art and literature courses can also benefit our majors. Both within the major and across the Gen Ed requirements, the value of the courses could be enhanced by making students aware of thematic links across disciplines: themes of globalization, international relations, multicultural historical influences, and greater emphasis on cultural parity between diverse peoples might enhance relevance of courses in relationship to each other. Such themes could be indicated in the literature, such as the college catalog, or developed in conjunction with the Advising office. Good advising could help students to select courses that complement each other and contributed to a more meaningful educational experience.

THEATRE

We very strongly believe that the College’s General Education in its current form helps our students, but (as we expressed above) we do feel that some modifications are in order. We do not want our majors to think of the General Education courses as "simply things to check off a list", but as an integrated and necessary part of their education within our discipline – not separate from it. It will make them better theatre artists and better citizens of the world.

The nature of Theatre (and its study) means searching across disciplines for relative ideas, for connective thoughts and for answers. When we discuss a particular play, it is imperative to discuss its social, cultural and historical contexts. When actors, designers, playwrights, dramaturgs and all other practitioners of the theatrical art look to a script for "answers" they analyze the characters, their motivations, their desires, and their actions (with at least a nod towards psychological analysis.) In the incredibly diverse world of Drama, there will be characters that are doctors, scientists, philosophers and the un-educated working class --- actors need to attempt to think like these different people. In order to do so effectively, they should know something about the ways that others “think.” It helps therefore to learn about the different methods of inquiry ie quantitative analysis,

the scientific method or logic. A play starts as a script – an idea -- the realization of that idea requires "making connections."

The best possible way to enhance General Education then is to implement measures that foster or increase those connections. Some such measures were expressed in response to the first question.