Survey of the Faculty on Plymouth State University's General Education Program

Spring 2012

I. First Year Experience
Composition (EN 1200) 3 credits
First Year Seminar (IS 1111) 3 credits
Mathematics Foundation (MA 1500 or higher) 3 credits

II. Directions
Creative Thought 6 credits
Past and Present 6 credits
Scientific Inquiry 6-8 credits
Self and Society 6 credits

III. Connections
Diversity * 3 credits
Global Awareness * 3 credits
Integration * 3 credits
Wellness * 3 credits

Courses in the Major
Quantitative Reasoning in the Disciplines** (3 credits)
Technology in the Disciplines** (3 credits)
Writing in the Disciplines** (3 credits)

Total: 45-47 credits
Total credits including courses within the discipline: 54-56 credits

Academic Goals
- A General Education program should ensure breadth of knowledge and emphasize the relevance and application of methods of inquiry and content to students’ lives.
- A General Education program should help students develop an appreciation of the various ways scholars consider and understand human experience, and of the breadth of human knowledge that is reflected in the curriculum.
- A General Education program should help students to develop an appreciation of the process by which different approaches to scholarship (e.g., literary analysis and the scientific method) can be brought to bear on the same problem; this is especially important given that scholarship is increasingly interdisciplinary and integrative.
- In keeping with the principle of integration, lower level General Education courses should be broader in scope than is typically the case with discipline-based courses designed to introduce students to a major and so should be separate from any major.
- A General Education program should help students develop the skills necessary for academic success and lifelong learning.
- Students should take several courses in the first year designed to give them a foundation of academic skills on which to build. These skills should be used and developed further in all additional General Education courses.
Purpose of the Survey

- Collect Data on Faculty Experience
- Raise Awareness of
  - Goals of Program
  - Aspects of Program
  - Ongoing Review
- Confirm Successful Aspects of the Program
- Identify Issues for Further Review / Possible Change

Improve the General Education Program!
Other Aspects of the Review

- Course sunset reviews
- Faculty and Student focus groups
- Component reviews (descriptions, evals, etc.)
- Formal Course Assessments (Comp, FYS)
- Comparisons w/ Other Institutions
- Institutional Data Collection
  - Advising, Course availability, Transfer data
- Faculty Week sessions and Faculty Forums
Faculty Participation

Faculty Involved and Response:

- Full-Time Faculty: 140 out of 207 (67.6%)
- Research Faculty: 4 out of 6 (66.7%)
- Adjunct Faculty: 49 out of 125 (39.2%)

Comments

- 556 comments to 9 open-ended questions
- >30 pages of comments!

Notes:
- in results here, Research and Full Faculty combined
- participant types/numbers based on provided email lists
Overall, 78.2% of faculty teach one or more Gen Ed courses per year.
Philosophy/Goals of Program

A: Ensure breadth of knowledge, emphasize relevance
B: Develop appreciation of variety in scholarship and of breadth of human knowledge
C: Develop appreciation of different scholarly processes (interdisciplinary, integrative)

Agreement with Goals out of 4

"%" is percent who Agree or Strongly Agree

Average of Full Fac: score: 3.42
91.0% agree/s.a. (excluding Goal D)
Philosophy/Goals of Program

D: Considering integration, lower level courses should be broader in scope and be separate from introductory major courses.

**Goal D:**
- Full Faculty: 55.1% agree/strongly agree (avg score: 2.58)
- Adjuncts: 72.3% agree/strongly agree (avg score: 3.04)
Are We Meeting the Goals?

Average score (Full-time): 2.82
Highest score (Full-time): 3.40 (Goal I2)
Lowest score (Full-time): 2.26 (Goal G2)
Take-Home Messages

- Faculty care about Gen Ed
- Faculty are involved in Gen Ed
- Broad agreement with Goals
- Diverse views on success
- Many comments/suggestions on Program Design
- Need better communication about the Program
Areas of Concern

• Aspects of program design
  – increasing size of some classes
  – availability of courses/seats
  – migration of FT from Gen Ed courses
  – hard scheduling / priorities in scheduling
  – course content
  – overall assessment and sunset review

• Communication
  – student understanding of program
  – faculty understanding of program (esp. Adjuncts)
  – process and results of evaluation/assessment
Faculty Week Session

- Two main discussion items:
  - Communication about the program, especially to Adjuncts
    - Gen Ed presentations, Workshops for faculty
    - Online tutorial about Gen Ed
  - Re-consideration of Academic Goal 4
    - Could some Major Introductory Courses count as Directions?
    - Faculty forum
What's Next?

- Post raw results and comments on Faculty Blog
- Continue discussions via Departmental Focus Groups
- Specific data/comments will be shared with those responsible for individual components/areas
- Explore changes/suggestions
- Communicate ongoing work with faculty

Accomplish required changes to make our Gen Ed better!
Questions / Comments?
“Hidden” Slides / Data
A. A General Education program should ensure breadth of knowledge and emphasize the relevance and application of methods of inquiry and content to students’ lives.

B. A General Education program should help students develop an appreciation of the various ways scholars consider and understand human experience, and of the breadth of human knowledge that is reflected in the curriculum.

C. A General Education program should help students to develop an appreciation of the process by which different approaches to scholarship (e.g., literary analysis and the scientific method) can be brought to bear on the same problem; this is especially important given that scholarship is increasingly interdisciplinary and integrative.
Academic Goals

D. In keeping with the principle of integration, lower level General Education courses should be broader in scope than is typically the case with discipline-based courses designed to introduce students to a major and so should be separate from any major.

E. A General Education program should help students develop the skills necessary for academic success and lifelong learning.
F. A General Education program should be reasonably easy to understand and to administer and should not present undue obstacles to students who transfer into the college or change their majors.

G. A General Education program should have built into it a mechanism of assessment and change to keep it on track and up to date.

- All courses and components of the program, and the program as a whole, should be regularly assessed and reconsidered.
Administrative Goals

H. Participation in the General Education program should be a point of pride for faculty, not a chore that detracts from the activity of educating majors.

I. Faculty teaching in the program must be knowledgeable of and agree to abide by the guidelines presented here.
Faculty Involvement in Gen Ed

Types of Courses Taught

- Foundations
- Directions
- Connections

% of Respondents

- FYS
- Comp
- Math
- CTDI
- PPDI
- SIDI
- SSDI
- DICO
- GACO
- INCO
- WECO
- QRCO
- TEO
- WRCO

Full time
Adjunct
Taught Gen Ed in Previous System?

% of Respondents

Yes  No

Full time  Adjunct
Total Gen Ed Courses Taught under Current System

Number of courses

% of Respondents

Full time
Adjunct

0
1-5
6-10
11-20
21-40
>40

0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
Created or Revised a Gen Ed Course in Current System?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who created or revised a Gen Ed course in the current system.

- **Yes**: Full-time (60%) and Adjunct (30%)
- **No**: Full-time (30%) and Adjunct (70%)
Type of Course Created or Revised

- FYS
- Comp
- Math
- CTDI
- PPDI
- SIDI
- SSDI
- DICO
- GACO
- INCO
- WECO
- QRCO
- TECO
- WRCO

Number of Respondents

- Full time
- Adjunct
Advising Load of Professors

Percentage of respondents by number of advisees and employment status:

- **Full time**
  - 0 advisees: 0.0%
  - 1-20 advisees: 10.0%
  - 21-40 advisees: 30.0%
  - 41-60 advisees: 40.0%
  - 61-100 advisees: 10.0%
  - >100 advisees: 0.0%

- **Adjunct**
  - 0 advisees: 40.0%
  - 1-20 advisees: 0.0%
  - 21-40 advisees: 50.0%
  - 61-100 advisees: 10.0%
  - >100 advisees: 0.0%
What are the Strong Points?

% of Respondents

Strength

Full time  Adjunct
What are the Weak Points?

% of Respondents

Weaknesses

- A
- B
- C
- D
- E
- F
- G
- H
- I
- J
- K

Full time
Adjunct
Strong and Weak Points

A: Presents breadth of knowledge
B: Emphasizes methods of inquiry
C: Presents various ways scholars consider and understand human experience
D: Presents different approaches to scholarship
E: Scope of lower level General Education courses is general / broad
F: Develops skills necessary for academic success and lifelong learning
G: Is reasonably easy to understand and to administer
H: Does not present undue obstacles to students who transfer into the college or change their majors
I: Has built-in mechanism of assessment
J: Is easy to change and update
K: Is a point of pride, not a chore
Application and Sunset Process

Reasonable?

Yes
No
I do not know

% of Respondents

- Full time
- Adjunct

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90

Yes
No
I do not know
Does Current Process Assess Quality of the Program?

- Yes
- No
- I do not know

Percentage of respondents:

- Full time
- Adjunct
Should We Increase the Sunset Time Line?

![Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents who believe in increasing the sunset time line. The chart compares full-time and adjunct respondents. The chart indicates a majority of respondents believe in increasing the sunset time line.](chart.png)
Courses that Could be Gen Ed?

% of Respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I do not know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Full time</td>
<td>Adjunct</td>
<td>Full time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Yes, No, I do not know
Which Areas Need More Types of Courses?

![Bar chart showing percentage of respondents for FYS, Comp, Math, CTDI, PPDI, SIDI, SSDI for Full and Adjunct roles.](image)
Which Courses Need More Seats?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>FYS</th>
<th>Comp</th>
<th>Math</th>
<th>CTDI</th>
<th>PPDI</th>
<th>SIDI</th>
<th>SSDI</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>% of Respondents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>20</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Legend: Full - Full-Time, Adjunct - Adjunct Faculty
Faculty Comments
Overall/Philosophy Comments

- “The ideas/philosophy behind the current program seem logical and admirable.”
- “We have an excellent program.”
- “I am generally pleased with the general education program. I much prefer it to the previous program.”
- “The absurdity of the current Gen Ed program never ceases to amaze colleagues from other institutions.”
- “...emphasizes current fads versus more traditional liberal arts.”
Comments on Meeting the Goals

- “the Gen Ed courses I teach [are] a point of pride, and I teach all of them with passion, intellectual rigor...”
- “The intent of having "broad" lower level...courses is good, but most are...narrower and less applicable...than courses in a major.”
- “...upper division students are not as well prepared as they need to be in general education skills.”
- “[GenEd] is my favorite class to teach...because the goals of Gen Ed are so clear to me...”
Program Design Comments

- Many, specific comments on design/structure issues
- Many about one component: Directions courses
- Many regarding governance and review—in particular the need for this review
- Some asked for mechanisms to better include faculty in the Program as part of course review
- Many comments about limited choices for students.
- Need better assessment, but streamlined “bureaucracy”
- General agreement on extending time to sunset
Program Design Comments

- “Gen Ed program is too complex.”
- “...weaknesses have more to do with university systems.”
- “The current program limits the growth/improvement of some professional programs.”
- “There should be a CT etc. in the course codes as many titles could fit in more than one category.”
- “No double-counting doesn't always make common sense.”
- “The current General Education program is composed of too many credits.”
- “Student surveys are of limited value.”
Comments on Communication / Understanding of Program

- Many comments pointed to lack of information, review, or communication.
- There is broad concern about how the Program is understood and perceived, especially among Adjuncts.
- Concerns about program quality and quality controls, including student learning, rigor, and faculty qualification.
- Many colleagues reported that they did not know enough to make judgments. They also said directly or implied that they should have more information.
Comments on Communication / Understanding of Program

- “Faculty need to communicate to students the pedagogical and philosophical underpinnings of this education.”
- “This survey has been educational.”
- “Some students, and maybe faculty, seem to have the impression that the courses should be easy.”
- “[I] don't know what metrics are really used to evaluate the course.”
- “I can see that there is a review process, but I don't know how effective it is. For instance - has any course instructor been tasked to overhaul a course because it was outdated or not achieving gen-ed goals?”