

GEC Summary of Survey of Department Chairs

(Survey completed at the end of March, 1999)

Departments responding(16): Art, Chemistry, Dance, English, History, Math, Music, Norwegian, Nursing, Philosophy, Political Science, Religion, Romance Languages, Russian and Central-European Studies, Sociology, Social Work.

ID Programs responding (4): Fine Arts, Hispanic Studies, Management Studies, Women's Studies.

Note: most of the Chairs discussed these questions with their departments before filling out the survey.

Following are summaries of answers to each of the questions.

1. How would you assess your department's (or program's) commitment to supporting the objectives of the general education program? (e.g., very strong, moderate, divided opinion, etc.)

Very strong – 10
Strong – 4
Moderate -- 4

2. Do you think that offering courses with GE attributes has been a loss or a gain for your department or program? Can you be specific about how that might be a gain or a loss?

It is striking that most departments and programs see it as both gain and loss.

Reasons given for seeing this as a gain:

- faculty members enjoy the development of new courses for non-majors
- these courses serve as testing ground for pedagogies and curricula that can be adapted later for courses for majors
- in foundation-level courses we have learned better how to get our students to be articulate writing skills, historical knowledge, interpretation)
- a gain to have a mix of majors and GE students in courses
- has attracted students to our major
- the departmental curriculum is becoming more diverse
- produced healthy enrollments (and staffing stability with that)
- submitting courses for approval encourages focus and makes the courses stronger
- have gained flexibility in course and curricular planning
- pursuing the ends of GE brings faculty into new interdisciplinary areas and motivates us to think about organizing our existing courses in new ways

Reasons for seeing this as a loss:

- doesn't allow students to take as many courses in the Fine Arts
- has created enrollment pressures on certain courses
- places a heavy demand on staffing and makes it difficult to focus resources on courses for the major

The Religion Department presented a special case -- an analysis of how their resources are inordinately consumed by the demands of meeting the two religion GE requirements ("In short, the GE requirements affect almost everything we do, and we spend far too much time tailoring our own intellectual interests to what we think students need to know"). They suggest that we might broaden the guidelines of the theology requirement to allow for more integration of theology with other material and methods of study. ("Most of the department thinks that while the study of Christian

theology should be mandatory in the GE requirements, there are other aspects of Christianity that are equally important to understand.")

3. Do you offer any courses that exist only to serve the general education program (that is, courses which wouldn't be in your curriculum if we didn't have this GE program)?

Virtually all the departments and programs say "no". The principal exceptions are the Math Department (its "Gateways" course) and the Chemistry Department (its Chem 112, 120, 124)

4. What is the impact on staffing in your department or program in serving the general education program?

Most respondents say "little or none." Several departments noted that with reduced FTE's in their departments they feel constrained in what they can contribute to GE offerings.

5. In seeking to attach a GE objective to a course, how important is the issue of bolstering enrollments? How vulnerable, from the point of view of enrollment, is a course without any GE attributes?

Only three respondents said that bolstering enrollments was a real issue. Most respondents said it was of minimal importance and that they did not think their courses were vulnerable for not having GE attributes. (Several, however, did speak of vulnerability.) One typical response is this: "We haven't attached a GE objective simply to insure enrollment, but since that is the practical effect, we haven't been indifferent to that issue."

6. If, on the basis of your department's (or program's) experience, you think our general education requirements should be changed, what would you propose?

- distinguish and separate out gender from MCS-D and require it also
- there are too many requirements, too loosely fulfilled
- move away from the cumbersome system for course approval
- emphasize interdisciplinary work (or "implement the Interdisciplinary, Integrative component") (4 respondents say this)
- should be two courses required in the Fine Arts
- have more non-lab sciences meet EIN or perhaps HWC
- do not change the FOL requirement
- does the large number of requirements make it harder for students to go abroad?
- reassess the necessity for a second science requirement
- "I favor continuing with the current curriculum. It breaks up departmental monopolies over certain areas and forces us to give stronger intellectual rationale for GE courses. I like that a lot."
- "I would oppose more requirements or the notion of linked/paired courses, which would be difficult to implement."
- "We think the GE program is strong, healthy, and viable. At most it might need minor tinkering. In general, leave it alone for awhile."
- "The MAR requirement needs to be rethought." (suggestion from Math Dept)
- the requirements could be more humanities-friendly
- some historians feel that HWC has been expanded too broadly and should focus more narrowly upon Europe and the European heritage in North America
- "We agree with the current philosophy that requirements should be tied to areas and not departments"
- "We would propose having one more artistic requirement, the first one in artistic studies, the second in literary studies, and the third in creative studies."
- "Undo the emphasis on science"
- "The ORC is impractical"
- (note the Religion Department request summarized under item #2)

