

St. Olaf students Jason Grimm and Erik Johnson conducted a survey of the student body concerning attitudes toward the general education curriculum. Junior and senior students were included in the survey. Jason and Erik sought guidance in implementing the survey from GEC, CEPC, Student Senate, and Professor Jo Beld, Director of Academic Planning and Evaluation. While GEC did not officially endorse the survey, the committee encouraged the students to proceed and expressed an interest in seeing the final results. Those results are posted here.

Summary of results:

- The majority of students responded positively to the question, “How well do you believe the General Education requirements accomplish [their purpose as stated in the academic catalog]?”.
- Students believe that a *sufficient* number of WRI, HWC and HBS courses are available for selection. They believe that an *insufficient* number of ORC, ALS-L, ALS-A, and EIN courses are available.
- Students feel that pre-registration and the practice of balancing classes by age severely limits their course selection both within and beyond the General Education curriculum.
- For a variety of reasons, a significant portion of students graduate from St. Olaf without having taken the classes most important to them. (See question 8.)
- Many students mentioned that the “spiritual development” fostered within the general education curriculum should not entirely be focused in the Christian tradition.

The results of this survey indicate that, although students approve of the broad outline of the General Education curriculum, there is enough student dissatisfaction to warrant further research into this matter. Registration was often cited as the primary reason students are unable to receive the education they desire. However, the influence of the General Education curriculum on student schedules is strongly correlated to this dissatisfaction. We believe that the burden of General Education requirements should be lessened, either by increasing the number of General Education courses offered, broadening the General Education categories, or decreasing the number of credits required.

We propose that a student/faculty committee be formed for the 2002-2003 academic year to continue the implementation of this project.

We would like to thank the CEPC, GEC, Student Senate, and, most importantly, Jo Beld for their help in the implementation of this survey.

“Overall, the general education system is very good. It truly makes a student get a liberal arts education and forces/allows them to broaden their knowledge in areas they maybe would never have ventured into themselves...”

“...but at times it was frustrating being in classes with unmotivated students- those who just need the GE, when I was interested in the topic.”

***** Responses were categorized into bolded statements. *****

Year: (circle one) Junior: **113** Senior: **102** No Response: **3**

Please list your major(s) and concentration(s): _____

Humanities: 44 **Math/Science: 78** **Music/Art: 29**
Social Sciences: 61 **No Response: 3**

Have you participated in an off-campus program of one full semester or more? Yes No

Yes: 52 **No: 160** **No Response: 6**

1. The Academic Catalog states, “The General Education requirements seek to foster the development of mind, body, and spirit that is at the heart of our [St. Olaf] mission.” How well do you believe the General Education requirements accomplish this purpose? (circle one)

Hardly at All	1	2	3	4	5	Extremely Well
Totals	2	8	61	117	30	

Please explain your response.

“I think that encouraging people to take classes outside their main area of interest encourages growth as a human in all areas. However, you can’t force this growth, no system is perfect, people have to be dedicated it.”

“I feel like I have taken classes outside my “comfort zone” because of the GE requirements. It has been a great way to expand my world view and development as a person.”

“Spiritual development is extremely focused around Christianity. I am interested in other religions and especially the interaction between religions. There are so many issues in the world that involve Christianity and other religions. Furthermore, even Christians must interact with people of other religions and it’s to everyone’s benefit to be a little educated about people different than the majority- even religiously! We need to change this!”

2. Please rate the factors that affect your choice of classes *outside your major*.

	No importance			Much importance	
	1	2	3	4	5
Course title:	18	38	78	61	23
Course description:	1	9	21	85	91
Professor reputation:	8	14	48	89	58
Advisor suggestion:	48	65	44	47	12
Personal academic interest:	1	3	13	83	116
GE credit offered:	6	15	37	87	73

3. If General Education requirements were not a factor, how would your course selection change?

I would take classes that better align with my interests: 130

There are specific general education requirements I would ignore: 69

I would take more classes in my major: 39

My course selection would not change: 33

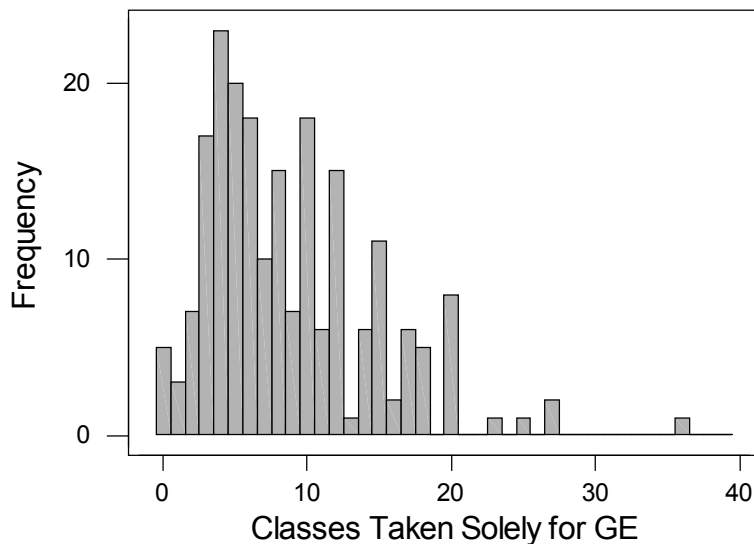
“Not too much – I make sure I take classes that interest me, regardless of the GE it offers.”

“Although my general theory is that I should always be able to find courses that interest me that fulfill the GE requirements I need, this is not always true. Generally, GE reqs. have been the deciding factor among several interesting classes. Occasionally, they have ruled out classes I want to take and forced me to take classes of no interest.”

“I would’ve taken more time picking a major and taking a wider range of classes. There are departments that I would like to take classes from that I can’t because I don’t have any time.”

“I probably would only take one science course. I would never take a math class. I would definitely not take an ORC – the classes are not very interesting that fulfill that req.”

4. By the time you graduate, how many classes do you think you will have you taken solely to meet General Education requirements? _____



* No student at St. Olaf has taken thirty-six general education courses. These results were partially skewed by student perception.

5. How often have you enrolled in classes that you believe deserved a General Education credit but did not receive it?

Never	1	2	3	4	5	Frequently
Total	1	47	43	56	21	

“I can’t really remember which classes, but I have heard professors admit that they don’t want to give GE credit when it should be given b/c the class is already too popular. Instead of not giving credit where it is deserved to cut down on enrollment, more sections should be opened up.”

6 / 7. For which two or three General Education requirements have you found a *sufficient* or *insufficient* variety of courses from which to choose?

<u>Sufficient</u>	<u>Credit</u>	<u>Insufficient</u>
2	FYW	1
118	WRI	6
18	FOL	2
5	ORC	106
10	MAR	24
50	PHA	8
60	HWC	8
32	MCS-G	26
28	MCS-D	9
7	ALS-L	43
25	ALS-A	43
9	BTS-B	5
21	BTS-T	23
29	NST	38
10	NSL	16
59	HBS	12
15	EIN	51

8. Think about the five classes outside your major you most wanted to take here at St. Olaf. About how many of these classes do you think you will be **unable** to take?

	0	1	2	3	4	5
Total	14	18	53	60	36	26

Why do you think you will not be able to take them?

- I do not have the time: 128**
- The slots were given to GE classes: 69**
- Registration problems kept me from enrolling: 65**
- My multiple majors do not allow it: 34**
- This has not been a problem: 9**

“My registration times have been anything but favorable each time, which has forced me to take classes that I didn’t need or want, so now I have just enough time left to complete my major/concentrations and GE requirements- nothing else.”

“Can’t get into classes at registration.”

“Because it is very difficult to get into art classes without being a major.”

“I got rid of all my GE’s by SR yr, but by then was not able to take any classes I was interested in cuz they were all “pre-pegged” by underclassmen.”

9. In what ways, if any, has the General Education curriculum enhanced your education?

I have been rewarded with new ways of thinking: 114

I have discovered a new interest: 70

The system forced me to take classes that I would not otherwise have taken: 53

I enjoyed a general education class: 30

“It has enhanced my education greatly, because taking GE’s in the first two years of college gives you exposure to other fields and really expands your interests and options. I became a Poli Sci major because a GE sparked my interests.”

“The GE requirements have allowed me to take courses that I maybe would never have taken such as a course in theology or literature. Plus it has allowed me to take courses like dance without causing me to feel like I am ‘wasting’ my time.”

10. In what ways, if any, has the General Education curriculum limited your education?

The GE curriculum prevented me from taking courses I was interested in: 92

The GE curriculum forced me to take unwanted courses: 69

The GE curriculum did not limit education in any way: 34

The GE curriculum prevented me from taking more courses in my major: 22

I feel that some of the GE courses I took were “dumbed down” for others: 10

“I wish I would have had more freedom within the religion major. Class choices were dictated by what would give the GE’s I needed.”

“I know a lot about a bunch of little things, but not much about any one topic. Also- courses in my majors sometimes had to be “dumbed” down for nonmajors who were there to get the GE.”

“As a science major, I already have so many major requirements to fulfill, I am limited in time for fun classes.”

“Though learning a foreign language is very important, I probably would have taken only 1-2 FOL courses instead of 3. This would have allowed me, especially when I was a first year, to explore other departments before deciding my major.”

“Basically, two credits are excessive in my opinion: BTS-T and the second NST. . .”

11. What changes, if any, would you recommend to the General Education curriculum, and why?

I believe an increased variety of course offerings should be available: 39
I believe that the ORC requirement should be changed in some way: 34
I believe that the FOL requirement should be changed in some way: 24
I believe that the science requirements should be changed in some way: 13
I believe that other specific requirements should be changed in some way: 56
I believe the system should be restructured with fewer requirements: 59

“Broaden what classes fulfill the requirements or limit the GE requirements.”

“Allow at least one GE to be taken SU. Not everyone is at least okay at math, history, whatever! No fair for my GPA!”

“Eliminate the imbalance of GE requirements within each major:

Compare: Math (MAR, WRI x2) vs.
English (ALS-L, all WRI, ORC...) vs.
Religion (BTS-B, BTS-T, all WRI, EIN...)”

“If a class has a GE credit, it should be open to ALL students.”

12. What other comments, if any, do you have about the General Education curriculum?

I like the current general education curriculum: 39
I believe that fewer requirements should be required: 36
I believe that the advisor system should be improved: 3

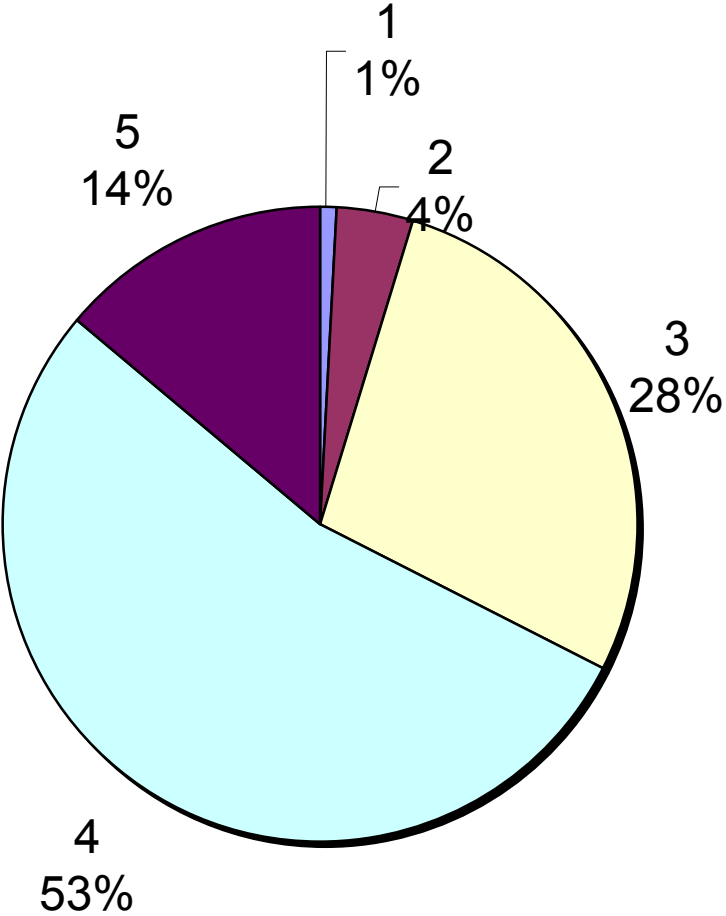
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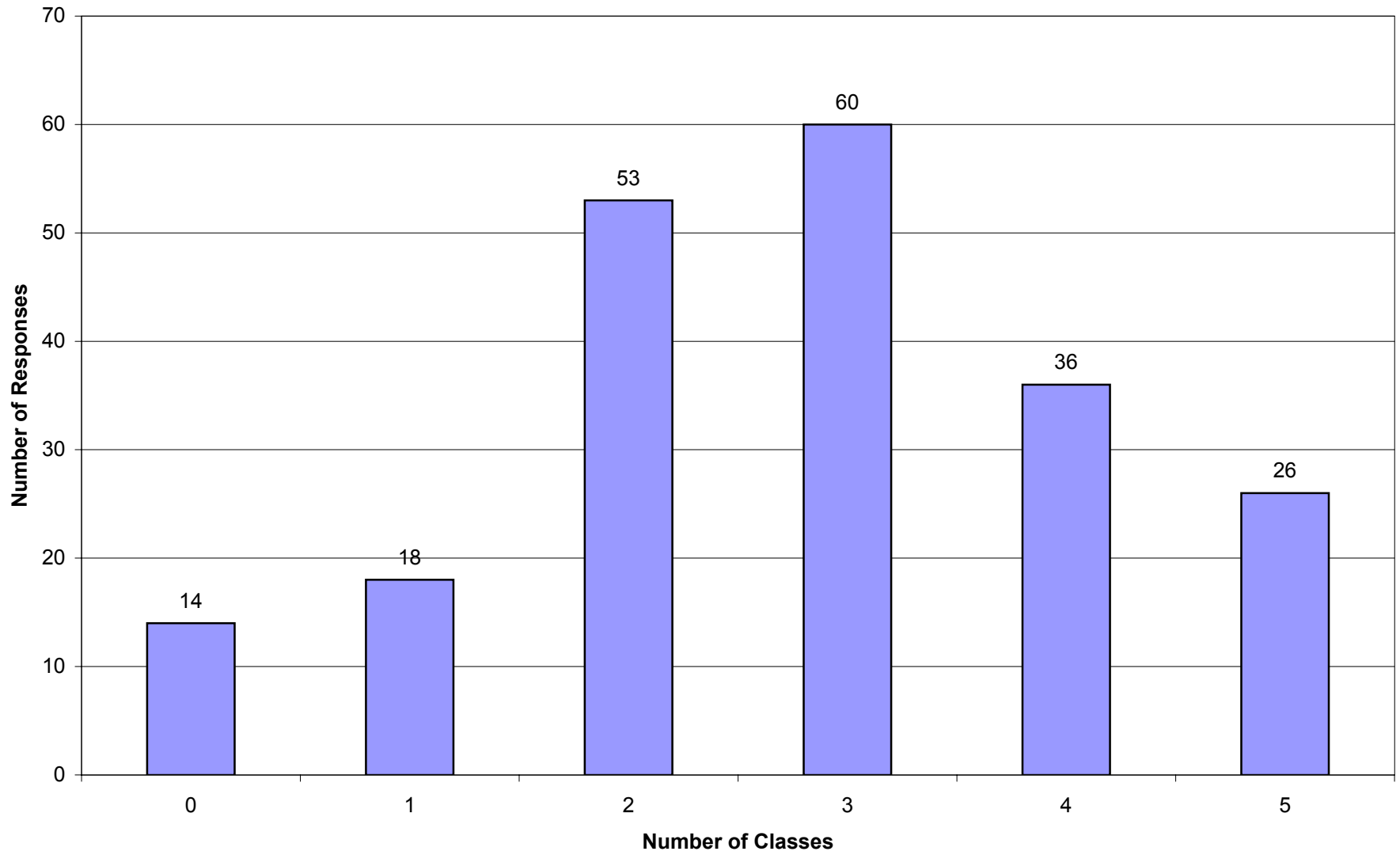
“Please give freshman better help in choosing their first classes- I know I took some that didn’t give me GE or major credit and I didn’t enjoy them, either. I was so lost!”

“In my opinion, it’s not the GE’s that limit a student’s schedule. It is, rather, that college only lasts 4 years.”

How Well Does the GE Curriculum Fulfill its Purpose?



Number of Classes Unable to Take of Five Most Wanted Classes



Sufficient and Insufficient GE Courses

