

Responses to Zoomerang Survey on General Education

Question #1

What do you think the purpose of general education should be?

Additional Comments:

- Contact with the great minds of the past
- A core of exposure to how various disciplines think
- It shows students how the curriculum fits together.
- Conversation should be about the core of courses
- Opportunity to explore area outside major in depth
- To prepare for a complex technological world
- Foundation of knowledge and critical thinking skills
- Prepare intellectually for lifelong learning
- I see GE as a foundation of academic diversity
- Writing and thereby thinking critically.
- A selection of courses outside the major.
- Students should be able to write in full sentences
- Cultural literacy & human rights awareness
- GE should provide different options, more choices
- Well-educated culturally and humanistically
- Critical thinking
- A set of core courses that students come out well-
- GE should prepare citizens, friends, logic, and ethics
- Gives them a foundation for the 21st century

Questions #2: which do you consider most important?

Little bit of everything	19%
Core of courses to engage in a common conversation	11%
Common theme	6%
Common purpose; citizenship or leadership	38%
Set of foundation courses	4%
Help students prepare for a major	11%

Question #3: Suggest other outcomes that are important

- Quantitative; knowledge of different disciplines
- Demonstrate basic quantitative & technological skills
- Possess knowledge re a 2nd language & culture
- Understand global cultural and the global economy
- Evaluate quality/accuracy of information
- Critical thinking; scientific method; research
- Problem solving
- Civic engagement, campus and community
- Familiarity with library resources.
- Technologically sophisticated
- Ability to communicate in a global, international
- Show awareness of international and global issues
- Stat analysis skills suff to be an educated voter
- Appreciate an increasingly global & diverse world
- Finding one's own way
- Appreciate his/her role as a responsible citizen
- Understand leadership and civic engagement
- Function in diverse learning environments
- Think scientifically
- Historical and global understanding
- Able to use the latest technology of the 21st century
- Use technology in meaningful ways

Question #4 Think of Your Own Experience

Reading the Greeks and Romans, and then following the great ideas throughout western civilization.

For me, being a part of WPU's honors cluster classes changed or enhanced the way I viewed education and different subjects because now I saw the interconnectivity of each subject and the interdisciplinary approach helped me to think more critically and on a higher level than just read and regurgitate. If more classes were able to get this across, we could potentially produce much more free thinking open minded students who were motivated to truly learn for life.

Forces you to step out of your comfort level and try new things.

I was required to take a few courses that I never would have selected on my own and I found them both interesting and valuable. Requirements aren't all bad!

I took a class on Buddhism because it seemed like the most painless way to satisfy the non-western requirement. Also, I thought I would meditate and achieve enlightenment. It turned out, my preconceptions were totally wrong, but I ultimately really appreciated the class. It was taught by a Marxist who analyzed the development of the religion as a genre of literature that was consumed by certain socio-economic classes with time and income on their hands.

I was initially shocked and then ultimately fascinated by this course. If I was told ahead of time

that's what I was going to get into; I would have tried to steer clear of the class. And if it wasn't for the non-western requirement, I wouldn't have taken the class at all. Instead I was presented with a totally rewarding experience that challenged my preconceptions about the relation between religion, class and commerce. I'm really glad I was forced to satisfy such a requirement!

Meeting excellent faculty members in my areas of interest (literature & writing). Learning about Marxism and art history.

Connections between ideas in different disciplines

Learning about another country and another culture. Learning to think on my own.

The opportunity to study through focused disciplines, e.g., learning history by taking a history of architecture course, learning social science methodology by taking a course in measuring public opinion.

None as I recall

The experience of finding out about different subjects and how to integrate that knowledge.

Working with others, living on campus and having dorm lounge discussions, joining in on campus activities as I saw the connection with the curriculum.

The GE course I remember most was Art History. It has nothing to do with my profession, but it exposed me to information I wouldn't have bothered to learn. And I found I liked the subject. I still reflect on the experience of the faculty teaching the courses--many were senior faculty who also taught advanced courses in the major. Our GE is mostly taught by adjuncts with little or no ties to the institution or the major

One course I did not know anything about but found useful the rest of my academic life was a course in philosophy.

Important: information from multiple content areas (sociology, philosophy, history, psychology, anthropology, etc.) provides multiple lenses through which to view other people and situations

Inspirational or life-changing? That's a bit much to ask of the GE experience...

Opportunity to explore areas outside major - relate to other disciplines - was very useful later on. Pursuit of areas of personal interest was appreciated and fun.

Most inspirational was a religion and society course. Most intriguing was an ethnomusicology course and most illuminating was a course in the recent history of communist China which I took without the prerequisites.

My ge for a BS in applied math was any 2 humanities, any 2 social studies, and another 2 courses in

either social studies or humanities.

A general philosophy of what it means to be a "life long learner" and continuous ways to find information.

I was able to explore a wide variety of topics, and avoid courses I did not need. In retrospect, it could have been more cohesive. It required 28 credits, which allowed me to pursue a major and a minor, as well as other courses I was interested in.

Courses that I felt would have an impact on achieving a successful career. Having hands-on experience as part of the course was the key.

Comparative religions broaden my view of the world and how different people interpreted the spiritual realm.

The ability to dabble, try new courses, things I wasn't able to take in high school - this helped me to determine my major and allowed me to learn a variety of subjects not previously studied.

learned to see the world in a new way, but don't know if it was GE , or just the whole college experience

More than anything else I remember individual faculty members whose teaching was inspirational. Another thing I liked about my undergraduate program was the required university-wide seminars for all GE students.

I was allowed the flexibility to choose -- the room to explore. Our students do not have this option.

Learning how to interpret information from different academic frames of reference.

At CUNY we had a form of general education that was much more flexible, and I took not only the required core but some advanced courses that could have led to a minor. What I remember best was that the freedom of choice that the program allowed introduced me to approach to knowledge of several disciplines.

If there is any one theme that GE should have, it should be to open students up to different ways of learning.

We had great freedom in GE. It was called a "breadth" requirement. The freedom it implied was quite empowering.

Religion courses

Since I studied High School in another country, I found that the American GE courses were equivalent to first, maybe second, year of High School for me. I was shocked.

nothing at all

Options -- the ability to take courses that were of interest and challenged me. My undergraduate college (Lycoming College) only required a few GE courses, the rest were GE electives to be chosen in specified academic disciplines from all available courses (where the prerequisites were met) by the student.

Two particular disciplines come to mind that interested me -- English courses (Shakespeare and Creative Writing) and History/Philosophy Courses (Conflict in Western Civilization and a History of Religion in the US) that opened

My eyes to different world views and were of interest because I chose the topics.

Courses that expanded my knowledge of past and current historical, cultural and artistic perspectives and the problems that occurred in many health, social and economic areas

My "core" courses at Douglass College provided me a great deal of flexibility--instead of everything being "Intro to" there were topical/thematically named courses across a number of disciplines. I think more creativity in connecting the disciplines through course offering will overcome some of the ridiculous competition among dept for GE requirements. It is all so desperate and shortsighted!

As an engineering student, I had chosen my major going in, so I viewed the GE as sort of a nuisance. I believe that I internalized an attitude pervasive among vocational/professional faculty and students. In retrospect I realize that my various GE course were more important and in fact formative in the sense that they exposed me to worlds I didn't know existed, and only decided to pursue later in life. My major courses, again in retrospect, turned out to be less important since most of what I actually did as a working engineer I learned on the job.

As a Chemistry major, I found my required literature courses to be an excellent way to expand my analytical abilities in a completely different way; I ended up minoring in English. My school was in MA, and we were required to take two history courses, one on the history of New England; I learned a great deal about the part of the country where I had lived my entire life. Art history gave me a new appreciation for the Humanities. We were required to take at least one science course outside our major. I selected geology; that decision changed the entire direction of my career and life. The only required distribution course about which I have nothing good to say is economics. Ick.

The freedom to select the courses I wanted.

My exposure to a great variety of cultures and views of life

taking women studies class (as part of the GE) and learned about gender issues

I did not have a GE program.

The diversity of courses that I took gave me an excellent knowledge base.

I especially enjoyed the introductory courses in disciplines that I had not studied at the high school level including philosophy, psychology and sociology. I also remember being excited about the coverage of common themes and historical periods by courses in different disciplines.

I found myself interested in areas I hadn't previously thought I would be.

The professors who gave me another view of things I thought had no other answers

The learning communities that connected students, faculty and education.

I attended a women's college. That alone was life-changing.

Learning a foreign language. I was awful but it got me to France

Music and art appreciation. I can now discuss them in public and read the newspaper arts section.

Exposure to courses outside my major made me realize I had interests that, otherwise, I would not have known.

Having a variety a courses to take, from art history and anthropology to psychology and zoology that one does not usually take or have during their high school education.

Courses in philosophy, literature and Asian humanities.

My moral reasoning course.

Sociology and Anthropology and psych opened a new world to me.

Learned other things beside my major and later connected those things with my own discipline.

My college did not have GE

Stretching myself beyond what was expected for my major and by self evaluation.

I would never have taken an art history course without the requirement to fulfill and I use that knowledge all the time. I love going to art museums now!

Question #5 Other Comments on General Education

Integrating knowledge is an element of critical think, other outcomes should focus on quantitative skills, use technology to achieve goals, knowledge of other disciplines

Please consider providing a home for the integration of the learning literacies into the curriculum.

The GE should be viewed as one of the most important parts of turning our students into educated individuals: as or more important than a student's major. GE should not be viewed as an inconvenient obstacle between enrollment and employment.

I think the number of credits should be lowered--we might cut down on the five electives (two GE, three upper level) for starters. I support the American Democracy Project and like the idea of a common theme, maybe even a common reading experience for all on campus.

Looking forward to the forum because I think civic engagement just might be the best way to tie ge together. hoping to see what wagner experience can tell us.

Yes, meet with all departments in the liberal arts to know more obtaining a thorough liberal arts education

Allow students to pursue general areas of knowledge (e.g., history, science, literature) through specific study if they choose (e.g., studying 20th century American Lit or a Women Authors class, not only through a survey course). Keep some version of the Cluster concept so students can see linkages more readily.

Structure some of the offerings to be less lecture-oriented and more experiential.

I don't think our students understand the purpose of GE requirements. I believe they come to college with the intent of learning what they need in order to get a job. And I don't think anything we do in teaching GE requirements gives them reason to think anything different.

I wonder if every major needs a 50+ GE core. Many do not have that high a number in their core. I wonder if we need PE and Community Health; 2 lab sciences; a specific racism and sexism course. If we are doing our jobs that is covered in a course.

I consider what we teach in sexism and racism to be basically out dated methodology. Between GE requirements and several rapacious majors (including the College of Education) our students have little individual freedom to explore the riches of our curriculum.

If it doesn't fit in the GE, the major, and in the College of Ed requirements why take the course? More freedom of choice for the students!!! Less domination by the College of Education on limiting students' choices. Do away with the college of ed and make it a pure master's program.

Look at the old catalogs and the courses that formed the basis for what has transpired since.

None

Build in plenty of flexibility so students can study second or third areas in depth, possibly even complete a minor in area outside their major. More depth, less breadth.

"Our GE requirement is too many credits and so specific; I have believed for years that it impacts on timely graduation. Also, our 128-credit degree requirement means many students have to go to summer school or take an extra semester because we offer mostly 3-credit courses.

I think this GE discussion provides the university with an opportunity to distinguish itself. One way would be to create a civic engagement focus-- unusual for a public institution. I think we need an academic focus that we can point to for every student that is rigorous and perhaps transformative. I would be truly disappointed if this discussion results simply in reducing the number of credits required and not a whole re-thinking of what GE in the context of what we value as an institution and how we can and should prepare students for their futures. "

"Focus on the items in #3.

Look at the Partnership for 21st century skills (a K-12) initiative, <http://www.21stcenturyskills.org/> GE should be no more than 25-30% of the degree. Course offerings should not be limited to the traditional courses as they now are -- how about Information processing in the

21st century as a course? How about Working effectively with Others as a service learning course? How about internships as GE acceptable? We are too rigid in our offerings. A university education to me is about the exploration of ideas -- we do not have that in our GE. Let's do it differently.

Remember interdisciplinary programs!! We should not have to suffer at the feet of a GE program for which we are already addressing many of its goals!

The Language requirement is extremely important and should actually be raised. This, however, makes more sense as a graduation requirement.

Students must have at least one year of language study if they earn a 4-yr. undergraduate degree. Otherwise, the piece of paper is useless.

We must remember that we are not just contributing to build US citizens, but also global citizens. The GE courses have to broaden student's views of themselves, their environment and their nation in reference to the rest of the world.

change - and reduce - the program radically. it's too big and incoherent. The learning outcomes are not measurable.

I suggest reducing the "required" core (i.e., 3 social sciences, 2 arts/communication, etc.) yet maintaining the GE electives. I also suggest beginning the conversation of the importance of GEs at Orientation, mandating it in FY Seminar, and continuing to articulate its importance throughout a student's education

I couldn't fit in my answer in the first question so I will do so here: It is a group of core courses that expand and ground the student's awareness of historical, cultural and artistic perspectives of the world and the problems that occur in many health, social and economic areas with opportunity to provide solutions to these problems and to directly participate in their solutions.

I think a complete overhaul of the style of GE--I would like to see something along the lines of the Wagner Plan that we listened to on Nov 20th--learning communities, tiered courses and experiential learning at entry and exit points. Fascinating

Stop playing pretend by passing students through Writing Effective Prose until they consistently write effective prose. The act of writing effective prose is a tangible demonstration of critical thinking, whether it is a compare/contrast essay, a narrative, or a three-point/five paragraph argument. I am disgusted (!)with my own university about the degree to which (the English department?) plays pretend with the lives of our students. Who the hell are we? I am not satisfied with the counter-argument about the importance of writing as a process. If the process isn't producing an acceptable product then there is something very dysfunctional about the process. Furthermore, our students' precious self-esteem will be better served by thinking clearly than by pretending they have achieved a level of thinking when they still can't understand the logic of a topic sentence supported by evidence. So, stop certifying our students as capable of writing effective prose until they actually write effective prose. Let

me say it a third way: Writing effective prose is the moment when we can establish expectations, raise standards across our university, and transform our students in a meaningful way; so stop allowing our students to pass Writing Effective Prose until they actually write effective prose.

I strongly recommend the fewest credits possible for the GE component. Our entering students are adults who are paying a lot of money to attend a comprehensive university. They should be granted the maximum amount of discretion in selecting the courses they take. They should be able to double or triple major if they want. They should not be forced to select half the credits needed for graduation from a prescribed menu.

Yes. I have many students who cannot write in full sentences when preparing a paper. They also exhibit no skills with regards to writing a paper that organizes thoughts, definitions and ideas. They need a lot of help with this!!!!

I think we clearly need to focus on integration and inter-disciplinary course work within the GE experience. This cannot be mere coincidental scheduling. We need to educate the faculty in interdisciplinary instruction, and we need a curriculum that creates synergies across the university from the energy that, in our current framework, remains locked within the individual disciplines. As an adjunct, I rarely get to experience inter-disciplinary teacher. If I were a full-time faculty member, here at William Paterson and we need a system that creates opportunities for us to work together more. This will create a more exciting workplace for us, and a more stimulating classroom environment for our students.

GE should give students options - maybe have several tracks for students to choose from. More learning communities that tie GE courses with foundation courses.

Fashion a program that can be adjusted more easily and perhaps more frequently.

Remember the link of curriculum and identity;
maybe build on our history of preparing students to serve their communities (teachers but also other ways)

Some core courses in skill areas; good organization of the whole set.

Keep things as they are. Right now it is virtually impossible for a student to graduate without being a well-cultivated person.

Less GE courses. More electives / flexibility for our students.

Students need to be introduced to the history of western thought and its relationship to nonwestern thought

Be sure to incorporate student technology usage into the classes so that students are prepared for the 21st century environment when they graduate. IM and cell phone skills aren't enough in the real world.