GENERAL EDUCATION

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OBJECTIVE

- Provide student perspectives on a reform of Penn State’s General Education courses and rebrand the name and meaning of General Education.
  - Determine what inspires students to learn
  - Understand what students want from their general education
  - Develop comprehensive rebranding of PSU Gen Eds

- Contacts:
  - Jackie Edmondson – Associate Vice President and Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education
  - Mary Beth Williams – Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, College of Science
TIMELINE

- Preliminary meetings with Dr. Edmondson and Dr. Williams
- Literature search
- Attended “Why General Education Matters: Re-Envisioning Gen Ed at Penn State”
- Presented at “Gen Ed Task Force – Gen Ed Matters”
- Acquired team members
- Subcommittee meetings/conferences
- Adviser and student focus groups
- Campus visits
- Student surveys
- Data analysis and synthesis
- Poster Symposium
- Final presentation
## PSU VS. BIG 10

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grouping Breakdown:</th>
<th>Average Credits (B10):</th>
<th>Penn State Credits:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities &amp; Arts:</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social &amp; Behavioral Sciences:</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>9*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication:</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic Studies:</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quantitative Reasoning:</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>6</td>
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</tbody>
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*PSU Social & Behavioral Sciences: 9 – includes 6 credits of GS and 3 credits of GHA
**PSU Ethnic Studies: 9-10 credits of additional requirements – not included because it is dependent on campus and may meet other degree or General Education requirements
### TARGET SCHOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>University</th>
<th>Specializations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UT Austin</td>
<td>• Humanities and Arts&lt;br&gt;• Texas and US Govt&lt;br&gt;• Clusters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Maryland</td>
<td>• Communications&lt;br&gt;• World Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UC Berkeley</td>
<td>• Writing and American History&lt;br&gt;• College-dependent courses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Rochester</td>
<td>• Primary Writing&lt;br&gt;• 3-Course Clusters&lt;br&gt;• Modern Technology; Fantasy, Horror and Magic; Society and Sustainability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutgers</td>
<td>• No university-wide general education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Minnesota</td>
<td>• 12 credit hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UT Austin</td>
<td>• 3 clusters of 12-credit themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nebraska</td>
<td>• Achievement Centered Education (ACE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rutgers</td>
<td>• Social Sciences and Humanities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DUS ADVISERS

• Pam Baron, Senior Undergraduate Studies Adviser
• Helping students understand and create their Gen Ed narrative to suit their passions and goals
• Learning about selection differences in ‘decided’ students vs. ‘exploratory’ students
• Discovering the differences between international students vs. local students
• Gen Eds inspire life-long learning and citizenship
• 10 Advisers
FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

- What they want to learn
- Empowered learning
- Action planning
- Harsh truth
- Open discussion
FRESHMAN FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

• Have the desire to learn but not willing to risk GPA standings on Gen Ed courses

• More willing to take a class with an easier reputation over a class that doesn’t have a reputation

• Want Gen Eds that focus on applicable managerial skills for after college

• Actively seek courses for GPA boosters
COMMONWEALTH FOCUS GROUPS

• Higher emphasis on cost value of each credit

• Altoona:
  • All Gen Eds at Altoona, major classes at UPark
  • Lack of options in what Gen Eds can be taken
  • 30 students and 2 advisers

• New Kensington:
  • All major classes at New Kensington, Gen Eds at UPark
  • Gen Eds offered seem pointless
  • 8 students
UPARK VS. COMMONWEALTH

University Park:
- Focus on major requirements
- Maintain GPA
- Prepare for future career

- Open seminar
- Less intensive than major

Commonwealth Campuses:
- Financial value of credits
- Time spent on campus
- Disappointment in lack of options
SURVEY

• UPark:
  • Smeal College of Business
  • Division of Undergraduate Studies
  • College of Health and Human Development
  • Social Media
  • Collegian
  • 525/760 completed surveys of all started surveys

• Commonwealth Campuses:
  • David Christiansen – Director of Academic Affairs and Director of Student Affairs for each campus
  • 440/584 completed surveys of all started surveys
Where 0 is the lowest and 10 is the highest, please evaluate what you desire to learn:

- Class is hands on
- Looks interesting
- Preparation for future
- Intertwined with major
- Lifelong passion

*543 UPark students, 450 Commonwealth students*
CLICKER QUESTIONS

• EGEE 101 – Energy and the Environment (GN)
  • Tim Robinson
  • 383 students

• EGEE 102 – Energy Conservation for Environmental Protection (GN)
  • Tim Robinson
  • 166 students

• SOC 001 – Introductory Sociology (GS)
  • John Fulton
  • 259 students
What is the most important thing you gained from your FAVORITE Gen Ed Course?

- New interest/insight on an old interest
- Knowledge major
- Knowledge for future career path
- "Easy A"
- Connection with a great professor

Answer Choices

- EGEE 101
- EGEE 102
- SOC 001
SUCCESSES AND OBSTACLES

• Provide a confidant for students to honestly share opinions and goals, whether positive or negative
• Ability to interact with students, faculty, and advisers across multitude of subject matters

• Difficulty relating to commonwealth campus students
• Reliance on third parties for successful completion of focus groups and surveys
  • Course-defined deadline
FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

• Emphasize Pass/Fail option

• Increase knowledge of Gen Ed narrative, university-wide

• Introduce Senior Seminar

• Redistribute survey to ensure deliverables are met
PASS/FAIL OPTION

• Make known university-wide

• Apply to Gen Ed courses
  • Define letter grade cutoffs

• Emphasize the importance and regulations for major courses

• Generate understanding of the effect on a GPA
GEN ED NARRATIVE

• Purposeful, relevant, rigorous, developmentally appropriate
  • NSO Introduction

• Understanding the purpose of Gen Eds
• Understanding your collegiate plan and schedule
• Understanding the multitude of options
• Emphasizing your story based on your interests, passions, and goals
SENIOR SEMINAR

• Life after graduation

• Financial literacy

• Relocation

• How to be an interactive alumni

• Shortened semester meeting once a week
THANK YOU

Questions?
APPENDIX
Most Frequently Used Words on Big 10’s Description of General Education
PRELIMINARY RESEARCH

General Education Credit Hours

University of Illinois (29)
Indiana University
University of Wisconsin (31)
University of Michigan (43)
University of Minnesota (47)
Penn State (45)
Purdue University (49)

25

University of Nebraska
Ohio State (30)
Michigan State (34)
University of Iowa (35)
GROUP MEETINGS

- 2/17 Presidential Leadership Academy
- 2/21 Communications Subcommittee
- 2/24 DUS Advisers Luncheon
- 2/24 Collegian
- 2/25 Student Opportunities and Constraints Subcommittee
- 3/5 Altoona Commonwealth Campus
- 3/6 Assessment Subcommittee
- 3/24 Betty Harper, Assessment Co-chair
- 3/28 UPUA
- 4/2 New Kensington Commonwealth Campus