Rethinking General Education

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Today’s Agenda

- Project Overview
- Group Ideation & Feedback
- Tasks & Timeline
- Questions
PROJECT OVERVIEW

- Interim Provost’s Vision and Charge to Task Force
- Trends in General Education
- Current State at Pitt
- Task Force Composition
Interim Provost’s Vision and Charge

Joseph J. McCarthy
Interim Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

Pitt Gen Ed
AAC&U Survey: What Shapes College Learning and Student Success

Percentage of Stakeholders Reporting Common Learning Outcomes for Undergraduate Students

- 78% in 2008
- 85% in 2015
- 83% in 2020

Percentage of Stakeholders Reporting Common Learning Outcomes by Institutional Type

- 84% of four-year private institutions have common learning outcomes...
- ...but only 78% of four-year public institutions do.

Pitt General Learning Outcomes (last reviewed in 2006!)

- Think: Think critically and analytically
- Gather and Evaluate: Gather and evaluate information effectively and appropriately
- Understand: Understand and be able to apply basic, scientific and quantitative reasoning
- Communicate: Communicate clearly and effectively
- Understand and Appreciate: Understand and appreciate diverse cultures (both locally and internationally)
- Aware: Have a sense of self, responsibility to others, and connectedness to the University
- Apply: Use information technology appropriate to their discipline
- Mastery: Exhibit mastery of their discipline
- Work: Work effectively with others
AAC&U Survey: What Shapes College Learning and Student Success

Most and Least Common Undergraduate Learning Goals

Most Common Undergraduate Learning Goals:
- Written Communication: 90%
- Critical Thinking and Analytic Reasoning: 87%
- Oral Communication: 78%
- Quantitative Reasoning: 77%

Least Common Undergraduate Learning Goals:
- Digital Literacy: 29%
- Civic Skills: 34%
- Integrative Learning: 36%
- Work Effectively in Teams: 37%
How confident are you that the majority of Pitt faculty understand our existing general learning outcomes for undergraduate education?
How confident are you that the majority of Pitt undergraduate students understand our existing general learning outcomes?
AAC&U Survey: What Shapes College Learning and Student Success

Percentage of Stakeholders Who Report Having a Common Set of Learning Outcomes vs. Percentage of Students Believed to Understand Outcomes

- 78% in 2008
- 85% in 2015
- 83% in 2020

Percentage indicating a "majority" or "almost all students" understand intended outcomes:

- 42% in 2008
- 45% in 2015
- 28% in 2020

Percentage indicating a common set of learning outcomes that apply to all undergraduate students:

- 36% in 2008
- 40% in 2015
- 55% in 2020

As Beth McMurtrie writes in this issue, “it comes down to thinking hard about a fundamental question: **What is the purpose of the whole undergraduate experience your college offers?** The time is ripe for that thought exercise because policymakers are demanding an answer. But you can’t just tell them that a broad-based liberal education creates problem-solving innovators and engaged citizens; you must say how.”
Trends in General Education

General Education 1.0

Distribution Model

2 courses social sciences
2 courses arts & humanities
2 courses mathematics
2 courses natural sciences
2 courses foreign language
2 courses physical education

Trends in General Education

Integrative Model
- Enable intellectual growth
- Provide opportunities for reflection and self-awareness
- Develop knowledge and transferable skills
- Offer platform for in-depth study in the major
- Prioritize experiential learning, high-impact practices

What is means to educate “liberated human beings—people who are independent and flexible in their thinking and capable of responding to the demands of a changing world in ways that are deliberate and civic-minded.”

Hanstedt P. (2012)
Prevalence of General Education Models

- Core Curriculum Model 25%
- Hybrid Model 49%
- Distribution Model 21%

General Education Model by Institution Type

- Over half (52%) of stakeholders at four-year private institutions utilize a hybrid model for their general education curricula...
- ...while significantly fewer (43%) four-year public institutions do so.

*On the Same Page? Administrator and Faculty Views on What Shapes College Learning and Student Success. Association of American Colleges and Universities. February 15, 2022.*
Current Status of Gen Ed at Pitt

- General Learning Outcomes are becoming outdated
  - Lacking equity, inclusion, social justice
  - Outdated data literacy and critical evaluation of information
  - Weak connection to ethics

- Little to no connection between Gen Ed (GERs) and Learning Outcomes

- All six first-year admitting schools & campuses espouse their own GERs (and upper-division schools include them via prerequisites)
Challenges with Current Status

- Vulnerable in future accreditation evaluation
- Hampered in developing transfer/articulation partnerships
  - Transfer rates have decreased nearly every year for a decade
  - We are being out-competed in facilitating pipelines
- Complex inter-unit (school/campus/institution) collaboration
- Extended time-to-degree
  - Over past 4 years 150 students:
    - Took > 6 years to graduate (many with far more than 120 credits) or
    - Have amassed 120 credit and not graduated yet!
  - Artificially deflates graduation rates
  - Increases debt load
Task Force Objectives

- Prepare engaged and informed graduates for the challenges of the 21st century without increased financial burden or time to degree;
- Evaluate and unify our curricular offerings so that we can optimize access, equity, and success for all undergraduates.
GROUP IDEATION & INITIAL FEEDBACK

- Motivations / Opportunities
- Challenges / Concerns
- Conversation & Feedback
What motivates or excites you about the work ahead?
## Motivations for Gen Ed Reform

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explore</th>
<th>Curricular Innovation Across Pitt’s Schools and Campuses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pursue</td>
<td>Academic Equity &amp; Inclusive Excellence</td>
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<tr>
<td>Support</td>
<td>Student Success</td>
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<td>Increase</td>
<td>Transparency and Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Improve</td>
<td>Accreditation Compliance</td>
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What do you feel might be most challenging about meeting our objectives?
Challenges for Gen Ed Reform

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<tr>
<th>Invest</th>
<th>Time, Energy, and Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collect</td>
<td>Qualitative and Quantitative Data Across Units</td>
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<td>Impact</td>
<td>Faculty, Course Loads, Classroom Mgmt, Enrollment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet</td>
<td>Objectives and Timeline</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adapt</td>
<td>Culture, Leadership Transitions, Strategic Plan</td>
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Pitt Gen Ed
1. What do students need to know to be successful in the 21st century?

2. What should students be able to do after they have completed our general education program?

3. Are we persuasively assessing and documenting what students accomplish through general education?

4. How should we encourage and incentivize faculty across schools and campuses to actively participate in genuinely transforming our general education?
Tasks and Timeline

- Guiding Principles
- Working Group Objectives
- Timeline
- Next Steps: Phase 1
Task Force Guiding Principles

- **FOCUS ON SHARED GENERAL EDUCATION LEARNING OUTCOMES**
- **SIMPLIFY REQUIREMENTS TO ENCOURAGE FLEXIBILITY AND EXPLORATION**
- **PROMOTE STUDENT AGENCY, ACCESS, AND AFFORDABILITY**
- **INCENTIVIZE FACULTY INVOLVEMENT IN AND COMMITMENT TO GENERAL EDUCATION**
Task Force Guiding Principles

- Be resource sensitive
- Support the University’s mission, core values, vision, and strategic direction
- Meet accreditation requirements for general education
Working Groups

- Review general learning outcomes & curricula
- Propose modernized student learning outcomes
- Design standardized Gen Ed curriculum
- Provide existing data to inform design, admin, assessment
- Forecast pros/cons of proposed changes
- Propose solutions/updates to processes and procedures
- Review existing structures
- Anticipate policy, staffing, oversight, assessment needs
- Propose solutions/updates to support revisions

Pitt Gen Ed
Working Groups—Process Guidelines

- Focus on student learning;
- Encourage open communication and transparency;
- Engage a variety of audiences;
- Discuss vision and learning outcomes prior to curricular design;
- Support proposals/models with research;
- Adhere to expected project timeline;
- Seek continuous feedback from our experts, leadership, and approving bodies.
Timeline

Phase 1
- Engage
- Benchmark
- Data Review
- Research

2024

Phase 2
- Analyze Models
- Test Scenarios
- Propose SLOs & Gen Ed

2025

Phase 3
- Revise Proposals
- Finalize Plans
- Approvals

2026

Pitt Gen Ed
Stay Connected and Engaged

- Microsoft Teams
- Email
- Meeting Poll
- Engagement and Listening Sessions
Questions