

Administrative Structure and Communication

General Education Task Force Sub-committee

Sub-committee Members

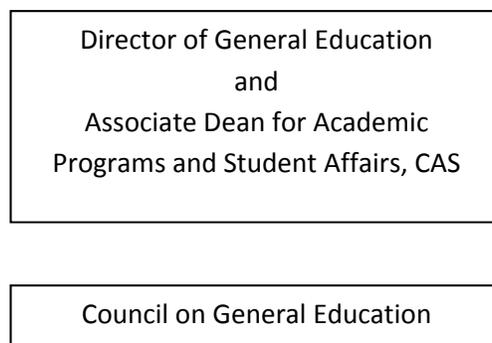
Sherrilyn Billger (Chair), Daniel Holland, Catherine Kaesberg, Jonathan Rosenthal, Stewart Winger

Executive Summary

Our primary recommendations to the Provost are:

1. Move the Director of General Education position out of the College of Arts and Sciences and into the Provost's Office, to enable sufficient time and attention to all important aspects of the General Education program.
2. Add three more workgroups to the existing structure which has a workgroup for Critical Inquiry. These workgroups should be discipline-focused: Science and Numeracy, Arts and Humanities, and Social Sciences.
3. Change the current institutional structure surrounding the General Education program with consistent, enticing, and effective communication across all constituents.
4. The General Education Director should coordinate improved communication about the General Education program, including advising, Preview, web page, course syllabi, etc.

I. Current Administration of General Education Program



A. Director of General Education Responsibilities

The Director is charged with the overall management of the General Education (GE) program. Specific responsibilities include:

- Monitor enrollment patterns

- Work with department chairs to have enough seats for GE courses
- Work with the Provost to gather and allocate resources for teaching GE courses
- Facilitate the Council on General Education
- Manage assessment for the GE program
- Chair the Interdisciplinary Studies program
 - Ensure that courses are offered appropriately
 - Advise students
 - Provide course overrides
 - Approve all relevant sub-waivers
- Serve as primary articulator for GE and Illinois Articulation Initiative coursework

B. Council on General Education (CGE) Responsibilities

(from <http://gened.illinoisstate.edu/council/>)

- To coordinate the undergraduate curriculum for General Education and Interdisciplinary Studies (IDS), ensuring that the spirit of the philosophy of General Education is maintained by the program.
- To periodically review and analyze existing General Education and IDS courses and program, based on program objectives and student outcomes.
- To report recommendations to the Academic Senate regarding program modifications.
- To provide consultation to departments, colleges, and other faculty groups who are planning new additions to the undergraduate curriculum for General Education and IDS.
- To review and approve or disapprove all proposals for new programs (majors, minors, sequences), courses, and changes in existing programs/courses connected to General Education and IDS in consultation with the Director of General Education.
- To provide the Academic Senate each year with a report of Council on General Education's proceedings.

C. Benefits of Current Administrative Structure

The CGE appears to work quite well, particularly in managing proposals for GE and IDS courses.

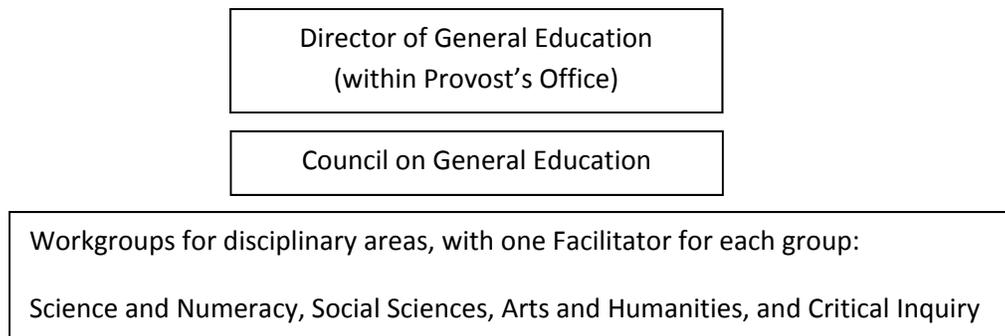
The current GE Director is also an Associate Dean in CAS. This enables the director to more easily communicate with CAS Department Chairs to ensure sufficient seats in GE courses. (Most GE courses are taught by CAS Departments.) In addition, course articulation is also easier and quicker given the Director's affiliation with CAS.

D. Disadvantages of Current Administrative Structure

The current administration of the General Education program does not allow sufficient time for a strategic vision, facilitating effective professional development for faculty, or support of a truly successful program. The main problems we see include:

- Insufficient professional development for instructors teaching GE courses
 - How do we ensure that courses cover required content and use the most effective pedagogies?
 - How do we ensure that courses fit the GE program when they are taught by a variety of different instructors?
 - There is no periodic review of syllabi for GE courses
- Insufficient collaboration between Assessment and the GE program
 - Current assessment may be too broad to ensure meaningful program improvement.
- Insufficient focus on strategy and goals for the GE program
- Lack of effective communication of purpose, goals, strengths, and benefits

II. Recommended Administration of General Education Program



A. Directorial Responsibilities

We recommend a new structure with the Director of General Education housed in the Provost's Office. We recommend a 100% appointment, at the discretion of the Provost. The Director's responsibilities would include the current list (as in I.A above). In addition, the Director would be charged with the following responsibilities:

- Faculty development (working with CTLT)
- Strategic vision
- GE program assessment (For example, are GE courses meeting GE goals?)

B. CGE Responsibilities

CGE Responsibilities would remain the same, with one addition. There is currently a very effective work group for Critical Inquiry in General Education. We recommend that three new workgroups (Science and Numeracy, Social Sciences, and Arts and Humanities) be added. Each workgroup would have a Facilitator, and the Facilitators would report to the CGE. We recommend compensation for each Facilitator; for example, each Facilitator could receive a course release, at the Provost's discretion.

III. Communicating Goals, Outcomes, and Structures

Current communication to students about the GE program includes advising, Preview, and the GE web page. There appears to be a prevalent attitude about "getting GE courses out of the way" that is problematic, and reflects a less-than-enthusiastic attitude about GE. In addition, chairs communicate about the structure and value of GE directly and through course assignments and the ASPT process. Many GE courses are taught by NTT faculty who have limited job security, and may only learn about their appointments shortly before classes begin, as instructional capacity funds are made available to department chairs. To improve the way the GE program is communicated, it behooves us to consider that "general education change is not just a task of curricular change: it is also cultural change" (Awbrey, 2005, p.4). Effective communication is vital, if we are to generate "buy-in" from all constituents.

We have a number of recommendations to improve communication about the General Education program. These include:

- A. To effectively communicate the value of the GE program, we should use enticing language. For instance, the GE program could be renamed to reflect its importance, perhaps as the Core Curriculum, for example. Furthermore, the structure and course titles could be crafted to entice students. For instance, at DePaul University students participate in "Junior Year Experiential Learning."
- B. To clarify how each GE course contributes to the program, syllabi should clearly state which GE goals are met in the class.
- C. All communication should be consistent.
- D. An important part of effective communication in the courses is the assignment of quality instructors who receive valuable professional development opportunities. We also recommend that all GE faculty, regardless of TT/NTT status, participate in remunerated professional development.
- E. We believe the GE web page could be expanded to include testimonials from employers and alumni about the impact and usefulness of GE. An additional option for the web page would be a showcase for specific courses with specific projects.

- Furthermore, Reggie Net could be an effective avenue to communicate about the GE program and relevant co-curricular activities.
- F. Preview provides a unique marketing opportunity for the GE program. In order to communicate the goals and value of the GE program, new students could be shown a video. This video could be produced by students with or without the assistance of faculty and staff.
 - G. Since the use of student evaluations of teaching can lead to decreased rigor and grade inflation (e.g., Eiszler, 2007 and Langbein, 2008), we recommend the use of student focus groups. For instance, the GE Director could organize student focus groups to obtain detailed, constructive feedback about GE courses.
 - H. To enable the best matching of instructors to courses, we suggest the use of (at least) year-long contracts for NTTs who teach GE courses. To support this goal, instructional capacity dollars could be allocated to departments more quickly.
 - I. We encourage the GE Director to consider a GE symposium, or an expanded role for GE in the Teaching and Learning Symposium.
 - J. We recommend that a tagline/slogan be developed for the GE program. Possible phrasing that arose from our subcommittee's brainstorming includes:
 - a. Find your calling (as opposed to find your major)
 - b. Broad set of skills for students to be successful in the future
 - c. Improve your quality of life
 - d. Creative and transformative engagement
 - e. Passion
 - f. Dream
 - g. Inspire curiosity
 - h. Sense of purpose
 - i. Foundation for lifelong success as actively engaged citizens of the world
 - j. Passionate commitment to meaningful life work

IV. Resources

Our subcommittee considered a variety of resources, including those listed at Milner's GE Resources page. We began our work in a detailed meeting with the current GE Director, Sally Parry. In addition, we incorporated feedback from the full task force, open forums, and the Teaching and Learning Symposium. Specific papers and web sites we consulted are listed below.

<http://www.jmu.edu/gened/genedcouncil.shtml>

<http://www.college.ucla.edu/ge/governance.html>

<http://provost.illinois.edu/committees/gened/docs/ep8909.html>

<http://liberalstudies.depaul.edu/About/CommonCore/>

Awbrey, S. M. (2005) "General education reform as organizational change: integrating cultural and structural change," *JGE: The Journal of General Education*, 54(1), 1-21.

Eiszler, C. F. (2007) "College students' evaluations of teaching and grade inflation," *Research in Higher Education*, 43(4), 483-501.

Langbein, L. (2008) "Management by results: student evaluation of faculty teaching and the mis-measurement of performance," *Economics of Education Review*, 27(4), 417-28.