

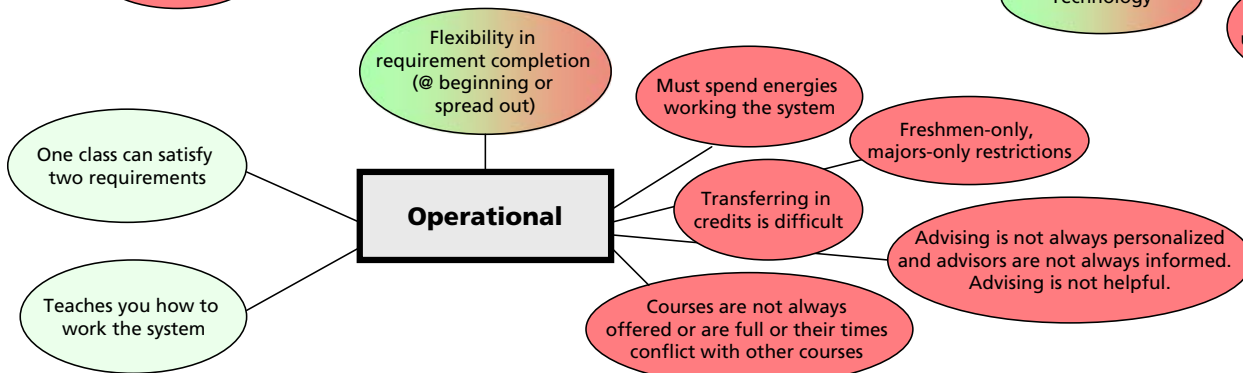
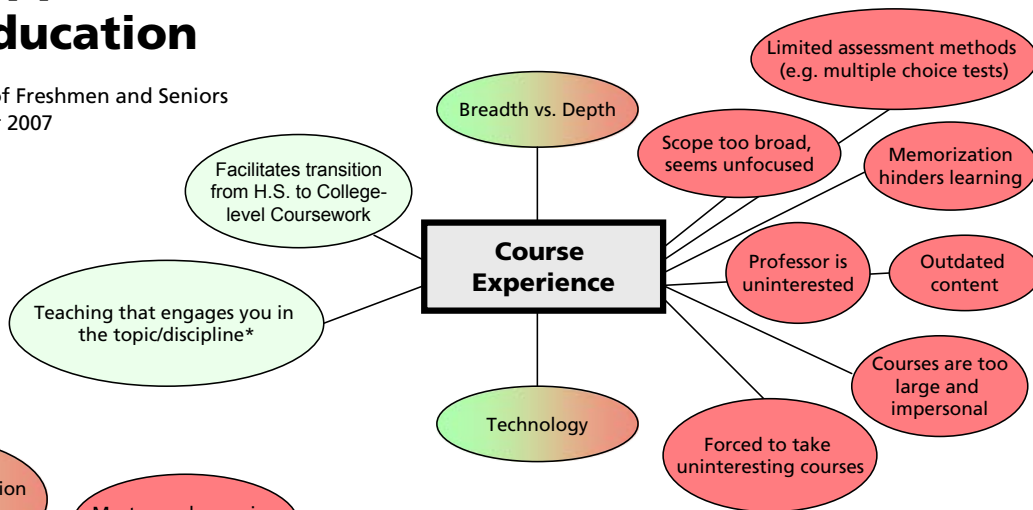
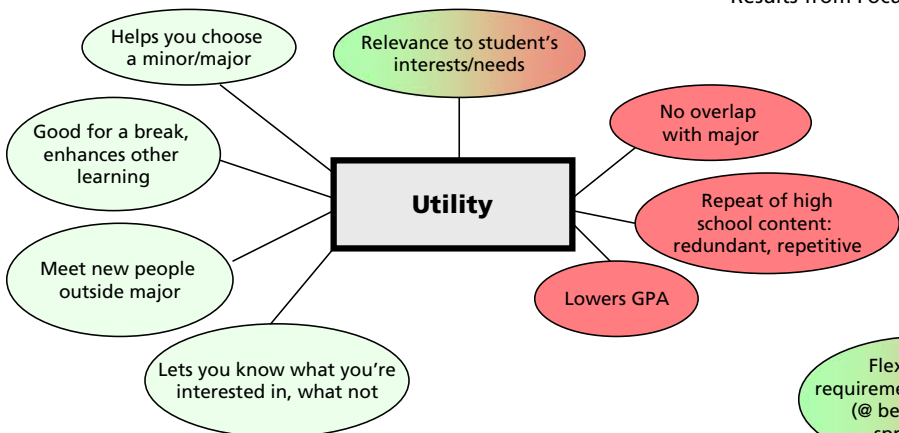
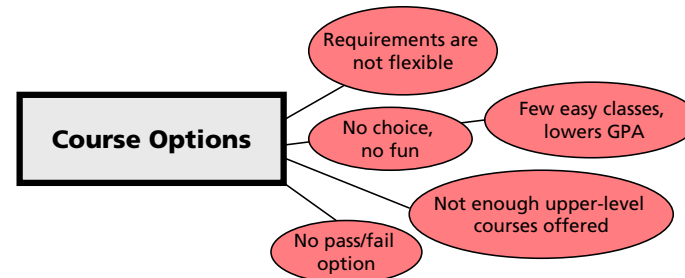
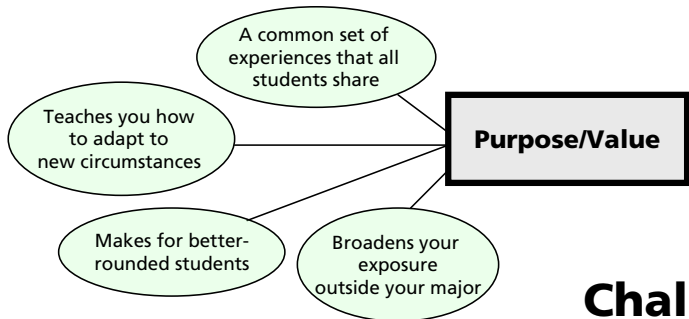
Challenges and Opportunities in General Education

The thematic diagram, "Challenges and Opportunities in General Education," was developed to provide a visual representation of UMass Amherst students' perspectives of and experiences with General Education. The schema draws from the results of two focus groups (one of first year students, one of seniors) conducted in fall 2007 by the Office of Academic Planning and Assessment (OAPA) to gather information about students' understanding of and experiences with General Education.

Student responses were coded and general themes identified and categorized as positive elements of General Education (green), negative elements (orange), or mixed elements (green and orange combined). This diagram represents the results in a manner that highlights the challenges and opportunities that students experience in their General Education courses. The broad themes identified are: purpose/value, utility, operational, course experience, and course options. For example, within the theme of utility, student responses fell into both positive and negative responses while, when referring to course options available, only negative responses were recorded. Within utility, students mentioned specifics such as General Education being useful in helping choose a major/minor and providing the opportunity to meet new people. They cite the lack of overlap with their major and redundancy of courses as elements of General Education that are not useful to them.

Challenges and Opportunities in General Education

Results from Focus Groups of Freshmen and Seniors
December 2007



Key:
Orange/Red = Challenges
Green = Positives
Rainbow = Mixed Responses

*See handout *What Students Value in General Education Courses*