

Challenges and Opportunities in General Education

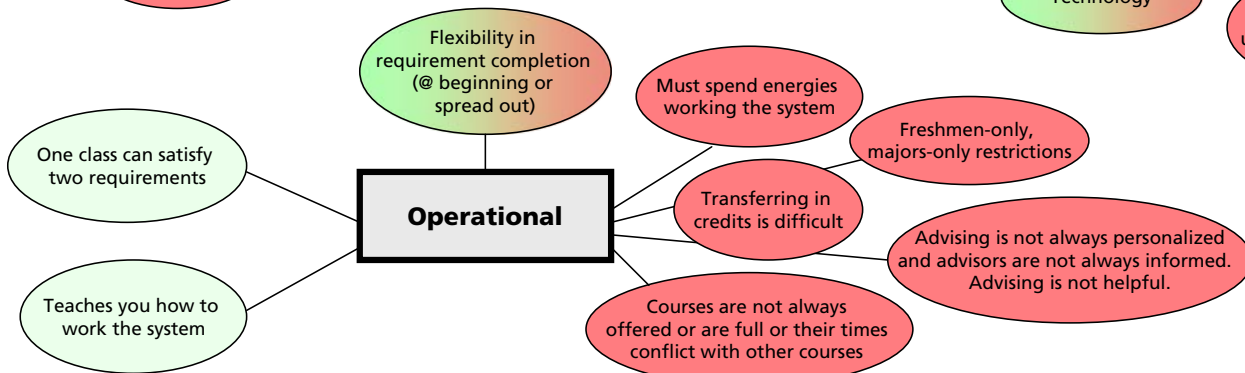
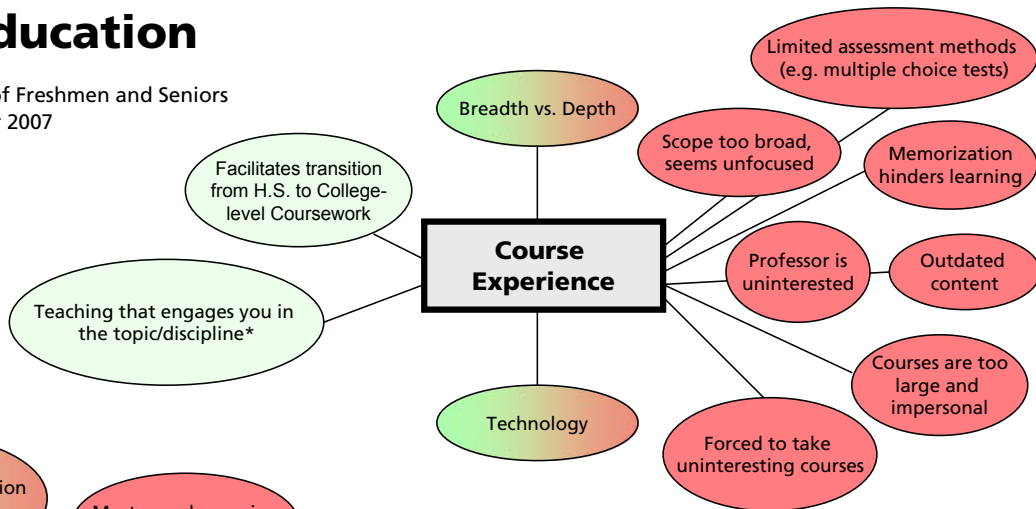
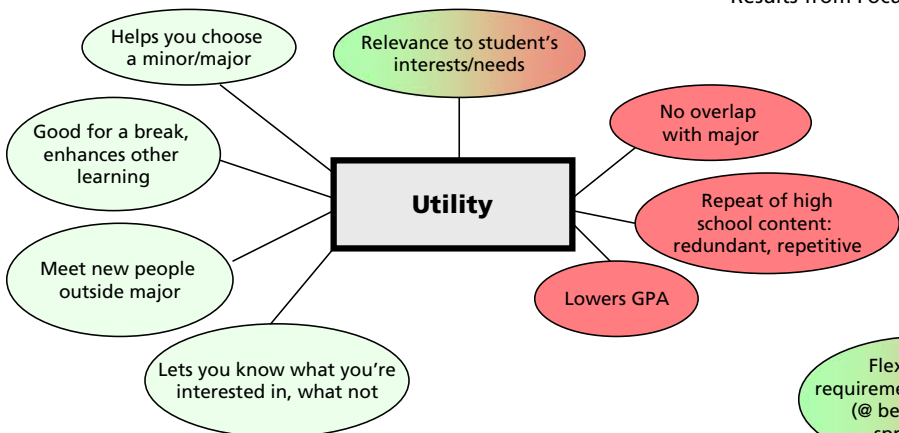
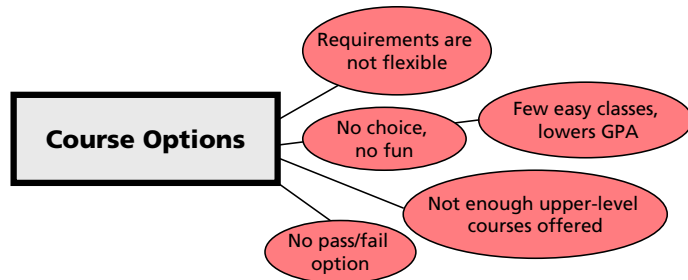
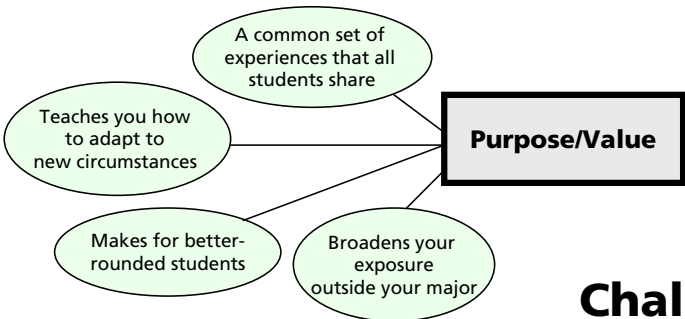
The thematic diagram on the next page, "Challenges and Opportunities in General Education," was developed to provide a visual representation of UMass Amherst students' perspectives of and experiences with General Education. The schema draws from the results of two focus groups (one of first year students,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

This diagram represents the results of these focus groups in a manner that highlights the challenges and opportunities that students experience in their General Education courses. These challenges and opportunities are organized around five themes: purpose/value, utility, operational, course experience, and course options. The specific dimensions of each theme are categorized as positive elements (green), negative elements (orange), or mixed (green and orange combined). For example, within the theme of utility, student responses fell into both positive and negative elements while, when referring to course options available, students only offered negative responses. 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.

It is noteworthy that while students are critical of some aspects of their General Education experiences, they do express and appreciation for the value of General Education.

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*