General Education Task Force (2000)

- Background

In December, 1996, a Task Force on General Education was assembled by Interim Provost Crosson and Chancellor Scott to undertake a comprehensive review of general education and suggest new initiatives where appropriate.

- TF leader was John Jenkins with a “cast of thousands” (126 people working in 11 subcommittees).

- Three year period of review.

- Final report January 31, 2000
General Education Task Force (2000)

- To provide students with a sense of the inter-relatedness of knowledge, especially the melding of liberal learning with the professional, technical, and specialized knowledge of majors.

- To Encourage the development of critical analysis skills and use of such simple modes of inquiry as scientific, artistic, literary, and information technologies.

- To produce graduates with knowledge, skills, and habits of mind that will enable them to contribute effectively and ethically in an increasingly interdependent world - and with the imagination, motivation, feeling, and spirit necessary for a life of learning beyond the formal classroom.
Council’s analysis of the Gen Ed program:

- Problems in implementation and not conception...The transition from the lofty purposes, as it exists in 2001, has not been easy.
- There is no natural constituency group to support for Gen Ed; departments are encouraged not required to offer Gen Ed; yet students MUST complete the Gen Ed requirements;
- Faculty intend Gen Ed to be an intellectual program; and students see it as a set of requirements.

Outcomes

- Faculty Senate urged the Provost to promote the importance of the General Education Program and to visibly encourage excellence in teaching in General Education courses.
- Diversity requirement amended to have one course focus on U.S. diversity and one on global diversity.
Recommendations for future improvement

• No exemptions from first-year writing requirement
• Reduce class size and ensure discussion sections in large classes
• Make residential learning communities available to all students
• Fund a Writing Center
• Equip more classrooms with instructional technology
• Incentives for departments to develop Gen Ed courses, especially interdisciplinary
Current Review

December 2006: Provost visited Gen Ed Council to discuss concerns about status of General Ed.

- Student dissatisfaction with “nuisance;” poor fit with majors
- “Grand purpose” must be articulated to students and faculty
- Lack discussion groups, writing assignments, problem solving in small groups, opportunities to apply what they have learned to real life situation.
- Need evidence that students are achieving Gen Ed goals
Gen Ed Council redirected efforts into developing an ACTION PLAN for the review and revitalization of General Education.

- Rearticulate purposes of Gen Ed
- Review curriculum and requirements
- Advocate for greater support for Gen Ed curriculum
- Provide incentives and support for Gen Ed instructors
- Develop assessment framework for attainment of goals
General Education Task Force

John Cunningham
Deputy Provost

and

Randall Knoper
Chair, General Education Council

Presentation to the Faculty Senate
March 27, 2008
2007 General Education Task Force

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Alex Deschamps (HFA)
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Martha Baker (NRE)
Anne C. Moore (Library)

Deputy Provost
General Education Council, Rules Committee
General Education Council
General Education Council
General Education Council
General Education Council
Rules Committee
Rules Committee
Undergraduate Education Council
Faculty Adviser to the Provost, Undergraduate Education Council
Undergraduate Education Council
Academic Matters Council
Undergraduate Education Council
Academic Matters Council
Academic Matters Council
Academic Priorities Council

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Amy Fleig (Graduate Intern, OAPA)
UMass Amherst General Education Task Force Focus Revised December 2007

Purpose & Goals
What do we want General Education to accomplish?
For example:
- Goals for Student Learning
- What should the general education experience do for students?; Why is it required?
- What should students “take away’ from the gen ed experience?

Delivery
How are we delivering General Education?
For example:
- Curricular Structure & Requirements
- Course Structure and Review Process
- Teaching Strategies/Pedagogy
- How is general education and its importance communicated to faculty and students?
- How do students experience the gen ed curriculum/requirement?

Assessment
What is working? What needs improvement or attention?
For example:
- Are students experiencing general education as intended?
- Are students developing the skills and dispositions we intend?
- Do students believe General Education is a valuable educational experience?

Systemic Challenges
For example:
- Tenure process
- Dept balancing multiple instructional & other demands
- Instructor sense of alienation

Resources
For example:
- TA allocations

Inputs:
- Student Characteristics
- What do students want?

-
GETF Activities to date

Implement “immediate” improvements:
“Why Gen Ed” poster
communication with Gen Ed instructors
web blog plus websites for students (Registrar page) and faculty (Provost’s page)
summer institute (June 2-13) with general session plus 20 in depth participants
The AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes listing was developed by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) through a multiyear dialog with hundreds of colleges and universities about needed goals for student learning; analysis of a long series of recommendations and reports from the business community; and analysis of the accreditation requirements for engineering, business, nursing, and teacher education.
The Essential Learning Outcomes
Beginning in school, and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by gaining:

- **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**
  - Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts.
  
  *Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring*

- **Intellectual and Practical skills, including**
  - Inquiry and analysis
  - Critical and creative thinking
  - Written and oral communication
  - Quantitative literacy
  - Information literacy
  - Teamwork and problem solving

  *Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance*

- **Personal and Social Responsibility, including**
  - Civic knowledge and engagement – local and global
  - Intercultural knowledge and competence
  - Ethical reasoning and action
  - Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

  *Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges*

- **Integrative Learning, including**
  - Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

  *Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems*
The purpose of the General Education requirement is to stretch students’ minds, broaden their Experiences, and prepare them for:

- Their college experiences and subsequent professional training
- Their careers and productive lives
- Community engagement and informed citizenship
- A diverse and rapidly changing world
- A lifetime of learning

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Delivery”</th>
<th>“Assessment”</th>
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<td>How well-equipped is the current system to deliver each of these goals?</td>
<td>How confident are you that students are achieving the learning outcomes associated with each goal?</td>
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<td>The General Education curriculum does this by engaging students in:</td>
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<td>- Fundamental questions, ideas, and methods of analysis in the humanities and fine arts, social sciences, mathematics, and natural and physical sciences;</td>
<td>Very</td>
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<td>- The application of these methods of analysis to real world problems and contexts;</td>
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<td>- Creative, analytical, quantitative, and critical thinking through inquiry, problem solving and synthesis;</td>
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<td>- Pluralistic perspective-taking and awareness of the relationship among culture, self, and others;</td>
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<td>- Understanding and evaluating the consequences of one’s choices and the implications of one’s actions.</td>
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<td>- Opportunities to develop and practice the skills of critical thinking, reasoning, and communication, including:</td>
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<td>o Working with ambiguity and multiple perspectives;</td>
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<td>o Communicating persuasively and effectively orally and in writing;</td>
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<td>o Working effectively and collaboratively with diverse groups;</td>
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<td>o Developing information and technological literacy.</td>
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