

THE PENN STATE SYMPOSIUM ON GENERAL EDUCATION

STUDENTS IN THE BALANCE

GENERAL EDUCATION *in the* RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

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P R E F A C E

In the research university culture that prizes specialization and the creation of new knowledge and understanding, General Education is often misunderstood as a secondary and, by some, even an irrelevant part of undergraduate education. Rather than an opportunity to enrich their individual lives and cultivate the habits of thought and action central to human flourishing and democratic citizenship, many students see General Education as a barrier to getting on with their “real” education in a specific discipline or professional program. They do not understand General Education as an enterprise central to “life as a responsible human being and citizen,” as it is articulated in Harvard University’s 1945 defining report, *General Education in a Free Society*.¹ As a result, today’s university students frequently approach General Education both reluctantly and haphazardly.

In 2000, the Division of Undergraduate Studies of The Pennsylvania State University received a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to address this question of students’ understanding of and attitudes about General Education. One part of the project was to convene a symposium to which they invited representatives of nine other research universities. This group met twice: in July 2001 at Penn State’s University Park Campus and in March 2002 at the Getty Center in Los Angeles. This document is a product of those conversations.

At the first meeting, participants focused on illuminating the sources of the problem, examining cultural and institutional sources of students’ attitudes about General Education. At the second, we discussed steps institutions might take to improve

students' understanding of the purposes and value of the liberal learning and the intellectual skills and habits of mind that universities hope to cultivate through General Education programs. This report is organized around the questions discussed at the first meeting and the recommendations discussed at the second.

It is important to mention that participants were not officially representing their institutions or those institutions' perspectives on General Education. This was a conversation among colleagues who reflected broadly on higher education and American culture today. Indeed, each of the institutions represented defines and configures its General Education program uniquely, reflecting its own history, mission, administrative structure, relationship to state legislature, curricular emphases, and other local considerations. Yet all are concerned to cultivate intellectual skills and habits of mind that liberate the individual, to foster a spirit of inquiry and desire to reflect thoughtfully on life's most serious questions and choices. And all have a goal of preparing the student for thoughtful, responsible engagement in the tasks of a citizen of a democratic and diverse society. The Internet sites for the General Education programs at participants' institutions appear in an appendix to this text.

We are grateful for the thoughtful contributions and collegial participation of the symposium members. We did not equally support all specific points that appear in this document. But there was general agreement that conditions like those observed do exist in American culture and in research universities, and that measures like those noted in Part II would help to improve students' regard for General Education and their interest in pursuing it thoughtfully.

In the hope that our work will prove useful to colleagues at other institutions, we invite you to read these edited proceedings of the Penn State Symposium on General Education.

MARILYN S. KEAT

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University Park, Pennsylvania

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STUDENTS IN THE BALANCE

PART ONE

Our question of why many students approach General Education with little enthusiasm or appreciation of its value arises in the larger context of the cultural and educational conditions that we face today. Enormous changes have occurred in this context in the last century, and even in the last half-century.

In preparing its thoughtful and influential 1945 report on General Education, the Harvard Committee observed “unparalleled growth—one could almost say eruption—of our educational system, taking place as it has while our way of life was itself undergoing still vaster changes.”² The Committee referred to the ninetyfold increase in the high school population over sixty years, to nearly universal participation and unprecedented heterogeneity of the student population. The cultural context was one of a rural agricultural society that had been rapidly transformed into a predominantly urban industrial one.³

As we consider how General Education fares now, on the rim of the twenty-first century, we see near universality of access to post-secondary education, with some 15 million students enrolled.⁴ The heterogeneity of the research university’s student

population is unprecedented, and the cultural context is one of rapid change and advances in communication, technological innovation, globalization of the economy, and a century's-end decade of American prosperity and hegemony that have transformed daily life and shaped a new understanding of our world. While the students of 1945 welcomed access to the automobile and radio and lived in a world engaged in a conventional war, the students of 2002 find television, the Internet, and cell phones ubiquitous and live in an uneasy peace clouded by terrorism and regional instabilities around the globe.

Today's students make their lives in an immensely complex world. And those who attend a research university find, far from an isolated ivory tower, a vibrant culture shaped not only by reflective analysis and inquiry into old and new questions but also by cutting-edge research, dynamic and diverse social cultures, and an astonishing burgeoning of technologies and information. In spite of all the changes since 1945 in both higher education and the world in which it stands—indeed, perhaps because of them—educators remain concerned about General Education. They have continued to reevaluate its goals, its content, how to organize it, how to balance it with specialization, and how to engage students in its serious pursuit.

The history of higher education in America in the twentieth century discloses a dynamic discourse among advocates of various philosophies of General Education—as a cultivation of the mind's capacities to exercise human freedom, as an introduction to important ideas and themes of human culture, and as a preparation for the responsibilities of citizenship. Certain institutions promote General Education as the groundwork of a thoughtful, reflective life of the mind. In recent years, another approach has been to generate lists of skills and attributes that define a well-educated person and ask what liberal studies and teaching techniques can be implemented to enhance them.⁵ And in the minds of many, given the vast number—even hundreds—of majors from which to choose in the largest research universities, General Education's purpose is construed as a vehicle for academic exploration.

The curricular configurations have been as varied as the motivating ideas. The most commonly adopted organizing principles include examination of a common human culture in a core curriculum, exposure to various fields of study through distribution courses, experience with disparate modes of inquiry, and the breadth and integration of interdisciplinary survey courses.⁶ Lately some educators have argued that involving undergraduates in the research activities of the university is a way to cultivate the critical capacities associated with the aims of both General Education and scholarly inquiry.⁷

In recent decades, the General Education programs of many institutions also have become the place to locate courses that address the heterogeneity of the student body and pressing contemporary issues. Skills such as writing, cultural concerns such as diversity and global citizenship, and even personal adjustment issues have become the subjects of new General Education requirements.

Research and experimentation on pedagogy and conditions that best cultivate students' learning capacities recently have resulted in curricular innovation based on new approaches to teaching and learning. The foci of this approach are to create "experiences that bring students to discover and construct knowledge for themselves" and to do this in collaborative environments.⁸

A lively and fundamentally democratic discourse—open to many voices and dynamically never quite finished—among faculty and administrators at institutions across the nation continues, as the search goes on for appropriate curricular programs and pedagogical techniques that will achieve their various General Education goals. These challenges are perhaps greatest for universities for which research is the hallmark.

With few exceptions, some 151 research universities embrace some notion of and particular scheme for General Education for their undergraduate students.⁹ Despite the challenges of the tensions between a research mission and General Education, research universities have not abandoned General Education. In unpacking the problem of why students do not seem to prize or understand

General Education, the participants in the Penn State Symposium on General Education explored why this should be so—even after a century-long quest that has not produced a universally accepted philosophy or practice of General Education. We began with the question, *Why do* research universities continue to embrace General Education as a vital part of undergraduate education?

FREEDOM, DEMOCRACY, AND OPPORTUNITY

Individual freedom through intellectual development

General Education is one way in which research universities act on their concern for the intellectual development that liberates students from narrow thinking and thoughtless acceptance of what others claim as true or just or right. On this view, General Education should nurture a disposition as well as the capacities to question, examine, reflect, critique, and make reasoned judgments, capacities that are essential to the freedom to thoughtfully direct one's own life. It should also be concerned with cultivating intellectual curiosity, the broad critical skills necessary to recognize excellence in any field, and an appreciation of complexity and esteem for multiple points of view. This view of General Education is not morally neutral; it prizes human freedom as contributing to individual flourishing and to a better world.

By teaching our students how to reason, how to read, how to solve problems, how to make connections, we have faith that the end result is a more enlightened, more engaged, more tolerant, more interesting human being and ultimately a more humane society.

HANK DOBIN

In conjunction with these ideas, it is worth noticing that our research universities, and indeed our liberal arts colleges and all other educational institutions not exclusively devoted to professional or pre-professional training, are among the few places in our culture where disciplined leisure and learning can be practiced for

their own sake. General Education is one of the ways in which this ancient ideal is embodied in modern institutions. It is not the only way, however, since it is in the service of the conviction of the humane value of learning that our institutions remain committed to classics, philosophy, pure mathematics, comparative literature, history, and other pursuits of knowledge. Nevertheless, General Education is at the core of this ideal and through it we express our belief that all students are welcome in the world of learning. Instrumental arguments in favor of General Education are significant, but the intrinsic value of learning is worth noting as well, and the frankly countercultural view of a life in its service and outside of the marketplace remains a part of the reason for the continued existence of the research university.

Another reason some research universities advance General Education is that it promotes the intellectual development and skills that give students the dexterity necessary to function in a rapidly changing world. The learning experiences in General Education should teach students how to continue to learn and how to employ the learning of broad liberal studies to interpret and to function in a dynamic, complex, and diverse culture.

Democratic and global citizenship and social progress

In addition to nurturing freedom as the capacity to govern oneself, the symposium participants also saw responsibilities of free citizens to govern in a democratic society as a major reason General Education remains important at research universities. As a social institution, American higher education, particularly public education, is vested with responsibilities for the maintenance and progress of the democracy in which it is situated. While it has embraced missions of research and graduate education, the research university recognizes a basic obligation to foster a reflective, informed, thoughtfully engaged citizenry, capable of discerning what serves justice and the common good.

In helping students to become broadly informed, skilled in analyzing issues and arguments, and able to communicate ideas,

General Education serves the goal of graduating citizens who can better exercise their democratic rights and responsibilities in a manner that is thoughtful and competent.

In engaging students in discourse on social, political, and ethical questions, General Education can foster appreciation for the many perspectives that are possible and the diverse voices that may be heard in a democratic culture. At its best, it can enlarge students' moral sensibility and sense of service to society; it can deepen their understanding of what is necessary to improve the human condition and community and develop their capacities to understand change and the will to create it.

In order to solve the problems of today's world, students must have the intellectual dexterity that is fostered by a broad General Education.

ESROLD NURSE

Some institutions also specifically hold that General Education ought to be a vehicle for transmitting a base of common knowledge and common democratic values on which a free society rests. Many General Education programs purposefully promote democratic social progress; they specifically highlight values of human equality, appreciation of diversity, and respect for other cultures, values central to democratic life and to a democracy situated in an increasingly interconnected world. At the dawn of this century, we sense an added mandate to help students understand a whole world of cultures and heritages and to consider America's place and purposes in the dynamic global conglomerate. We see a tension between the responsibilities of education to perpetuate a set of common democratic beliefs on the one hand, and, on the other, to cultivate the independent thought that creates change and progress in human relations and the human condition.¹⁰

Social and economic mobility

Some research universities, particularly public ones, see occupational flexibility and social mobility as valuable outcomes of

General Education. They are attuned to the economic welfare of the states that support them and of the students who matriculate with hopes of an education that will improve their economic status. General Education provides intellectual breadth and skills that enhance those opportunities.

Liberal education is a form of cultural capital that enhances occupational opportunity and class mobility, and it is perhaps the last great equalizer in a society divided along class lines.

GEORGE BRIDGES

The rate of change in technology and increase in knowledge mean that what is learned in professional or pre-professional courses of study is not sufficient; the economy of the twenty-first century requires a broadly educated, flexible workforce. The capacities to think creatively and independently, communicate effectively, and appreciate diverse points of view—those very capacities required for human agency and good citizenship—are important, as perhaps never before, to one's economic adaptability and success.

It is for lofty goals that research universities continue to espouse General Education. Individual freedom and intellectual development, social progress and democratic citizenship, improvement of one's chances in the world—all have a place in the discourse on and programs of General Education. And the context today is extended beyond the individual or the national to include responsibilities toward humankind, the world of cultures, and the planet we inhabit.

HOW STUDENTS VIEW GENERAL EDUCATION

Symposium participants voiced a deep and common concern about students' understanding of General Education. Many students arrive on campus with the notion that General Education is not important; that it is something "to get out of the way" en route to the specialization for which they have a passion or in

which they see the promise of a good career. They do not share the belief of the universities that General Education is central to their education, a program with serious value to their intellectual development, to the ways in which they will live their lives, and to the quality of civic culture.

In examining the question of what shapes such attitudes, symposium participants looked to the dominant culture at large. We also cited important sources in the high schools they attend and in the more intimate associations of families. Traditional students' developmental stage and the earliest messages they get from universities appear to be factors as well.

High schools

Symposium participants discussed a number of ways in which high schools contribute to students' dismissal of General Education. First, the high school curriculum appears *to be* General Education. Many students arrive at a university believing they have done that part of their education and want to get on with something new. For students with many Advanced Placement credits, and especially those who approach education as a checklist of what has to be done to get to the next stage, the attitude is that General Education has been "checked off." While certainly many individual teachers mentor students in ways that underscore the importance of liberal studies to a well-lived life, many high schools do not particularly promote the value of General Education or even mention it. Rather, they understand their primary task in relationship to their students' collegiate futures as instrumental: helping them to "get in."

Especially for many students aiming for the most elite universities, high schools are understood as only one rung of a long educational ladder.¹¹ A dominant theme of each step is how to get to the next rung, how to meet the requirements and move on. Students and counselors tend to be pragmatic and conforming, doing what is required to "get in" to college rather than encouraging a focus on the value of education itself. With this

mentality, there is equally narrow thinking about life after college: it is the career that matters, and the major that leads to it. High school students find little that stimulates them to think about the broadest picture of education or about what constitutes a good life. They have a general lack of awareness and hence low appreciation of the liberal arts tradition and how it might contribute to a well-lived life. Their notion of success often rests on making personal progress “up the ladder” and they give little attention to a broader social or civic context.

Students’ developmental stage

For many students entering the university just out of high school, this new stage of life is one in which they see the promise of greater personal freedom. They long to break the fetters of high school life, to exercise greater choice in their personal lives and about their studies.

Whether we consider students who are practical or idealistic, college is where they step out into the open and embark on life on their own. So it is no wonder that the reappearance of laying the foundations, of General Education, is experienced as a constraint to be abhorred.

MICHAEL JONES

Yet it is clear to many in academe who have the opportunity to maintain contact with alumni that, for a great many, the aspect of their undergraduate experience they hold as the most important over the course of life is General Education and the intellectual habits it instilled. The life experience of many has disclosed how short-lived the value of particular professional training may be to their lives; and they find that liberal studies have given them interests and skills that continue to serve them well.

Families

In the experience of symposium participants, parents usually

have high expectations for what a university education will do for their children. They have invested a great deal in them and want to see them well launched in the world. Certainly some parents are concerned that their offspring glean the benefits of General Education, but all are concerned about their children's future careers and professions. Parents, like their children, expect that this expensive enterprise will add to the students' post-graduate career prospects, and they believe this has to do with specialization, not with General Education. Some even see General Education as merely adding to the bill, especially as many majors and specialized curricula require larger and larger numbers of courses.

Undergraduate students and their parents have a high degree of concern about the student's career after college; the economic impact of a student's education becomes a matter of great importance. For many families, this can lead to an emphasis on the major and a lack of appreciation for the General Education component of the curriculum.

NANCY WESTPHAL-JOHNSON

Some symposium participants were particularly concerned about a growing consumer culture in higher education. Students expect not to be "limited" by requirements, but to find accommodation to their wishes and interests. Parents investing ever-larger portions of their incomes in the enterprise expect greater assurance of the value of each part of it. It is easier to see a direct benefit in professional studies than it is to find immediate value in General Education.

One final view voiced during symposium discussions was that some families expressly do *not want* universities to educate their children to be critical, reflective, liberated persons. Such families have strong values and beliefs that they do not want their children to question. For them, General Education that is liberating is simply undesirable.

Early messages from universities

Universities themselves contribute to the lack of understanding of General Education that characterizes the thinking of so many first-year students. In the American market culture, the admissions offices of most research universities are marketing enterprises. They know what their customers want to hear, and most often that is not a rhetoric of General Education and the value of liberal learning. Rather, the emphases are more likely to be on careers, majors, collegiate life, and “success” in later life. In other than the exception among research universities, little is done before matriculation to prepare students or families for the fact that the institution believes that General Education is important to students in all curricula, and that some sizable part of their undergraduate study will be in General Education.

The dominant culture

The values of pragmatism are deep and strong in American culture. We admire invention, production, and other visible results of learning, while we may not understand or prize knowledge for the more subtle reasons of freedom and democracy. So it is not surprising that many people perceive specialization and career preparation—“useful” endeavors—as more important than breadth of learning and General Education.

Today’s students have grown up in a fast-paced materialist popular culture of entertainment, sound bites, instant communication, and easy access to and bombardment by all kinds of “information.” The desire for instant gratification is more likely to have been nurtured by this culture than values of broad inquiry and reflection. The images of success are less likely to generate an interest in liberal inquiry than in career preparation.

During the last decade of the twentieth century, we have seen a decided absence of threats to a comfortable material life in America. Under such conditions, General Education may have reached a new low point in students’ thinking.

Mundane considerations of financial and social success rather than ideals of freedom, community service, or other more lofty concerns have driven the educational expectations of many middle-class students and their families.

GORDON STEWART

Political events of 2001 may reverse this trend as students are forced to reconsider their understanding of freedom, security, and America's global hegemony.

RHETORIC VERSUS REALITY ON CAMPUS

If undergraduates arrive on campus with little awareness of the meaning and value of General Education, they may find there not only similarly ill-prepared peers but also academic policies, practices, and priorities, institutional structures, curricula, and a culture that do little to change their minds. In spite of official institutional rhetoric about General Education and programs designed to serve students' intellectual and civic development, students may be hard pressed to find advocates for General Education, and may find instead that their understanding that General Education is not important will be reinforced.

A great deal of students' experience, beginning with orientations, then in classrooms, advising offices, and residence halls, reinforces that it is specialization, the major, and the career that matter. Savvy constituents, they also may get the message that General Education is not important from the organization of curricula, from department and institutional structures, from teaching assignments, and from how instructors behave. Even though the official rhetoric may support General Education, the culture and practices of some research universities bespeak a lack of a widespread, vigorous commitment to its pursuit.

The mission

While most research universities have large enrollments of

undergraduates, they often focus on specialization in their statements of institutional purpose. Their mission emphasizes the creation of new knowledge, and they prize faculty expertise in accomplishing original research and in training graduate students, primarily new scholars. It is specialization—highly focused inquiry, analysis, speculation, and reflection—that characterizes the academic culture and distinguishes the institution. In such a milieu, undergraduate education may not be given primacy and General Education, which may have *no* relationship to specialization, may be neither a natural nor a high priority.

Research universities define themselves in comparison with other institutions by celebrating faculty expertise, graduate training, and original research. This means they face a challenge when they then try to endorse General Education, since it seems to be in tension with the mission of the institution. This is not to say that such a tension is inevitable or insurmountable, just that it will not easily go away.

THOMAS TWEED

Many public research universities claim, as part of their mission, particular roles in the economic development of the state and in enhancing its social services. For them, there is added pressure to promote specialization that supports commerce and industry, health and other public services, and perhaps to emphasize these areas in its presentation of the university. American pragmatism persists, and the argument for the place of General Education in this practical mission is not easy to make or may be considered unnecessary to make.

Administrative structure and culture

In a number of ways, the structures and academic culture of the research university demonstrate the primacy of specialization and make it difficult to foreground General Education as a truly important part of the undergraduate curriculum. The structure of

many institutions does not provide a single point of entry (for example, an undergraduate college) that would include the responsibility for General Education programs. Rather, they permit students to enter academic colleges directly (for example, a college of engineering) whose primary purposes are not to champion General Education but are to provide courses in departmental majors and offer specific degrees. Some research universities do not have even a dean or associate dean in charge of the General Education curriculum or provide for effective oversight by faculty.

Universities are organized in disciplinary departments that set curricula and degree requirements and develop and offer courses. The oversight of General Education is not a departmental responsibility. Administrative structures based on the autonomy of departments typically engage faculty in setting General Education programs, but do not guarantee their involvement in or commitment to it. It may not be clear where overall curricular responsibility is lodged or what common General Education vision or purpose might exist.

Departmental autonomy makes university-wide consideration of General Education difficult and at the same time communicates institutional values to students. In students' experience, the academic department is what matters in their daily academic life. Specialization and specialists matter most.

In some universities there is really no consensus on the goals of General Education. Messages to faculty, students, and parents are unclear, in contrast to the definitive statements departments can make about what it means to be, for example, a biology or finance major, how to achieve the goals of the major, and what achieving those goals will mean in terms of a career.

In a culture of specialization and specialists, learning is presented as a professional enterprise, leading toward some specialty rather than a generally edifying experience for the purpose of living a better life or being a better citizen. The pragmatic culture in which higher education stands is paralleled within the institution: it values depth over breadth, especially depth in a subject perceived to be "useful."

Faculty

Many faculty at research universities across the nation develop and teach General Education courses with both intellectual passion and an awareness of the value of their work to students. But in assessing the problem of students' understanding of General Education, conditions of and attitudes held by some faculty members were understood to be part of the problem. Faculty identity and community are based in their academic disciplines rather than in their institutions. One is first a physicist, historian, or sociologist and only secondarily is associated with a particular institution.¹² Research in their specialties is the primary activity for which faculty are hired by departments, promoted, and rewarded with tenure. Neither their self-understanding nor the institutional rewards have much to do with their commitment to developing, teaching, or administering General Education. Indeed, to some, these activities interfere with their primary task of research and compromise their autonomy.

The research university prizes above all the autonomy of academic inquiry. In principle, General Education interferes with this autonomy by requiring a faculty member to design a course that conforms to goals set by another—more likely by the consensus of a group.

ELLEN WOODS

While most university faculties are involved in governance and set or legislate the General Education program, this does not guarantee that all faculty will be committed to its aims or participate in the enterprise. Autonomous departments and faculty make university-wide agreement on General Education matters difficult to achieve, and students may find that faculty are not necessarily boosters for the scheme (or parts of it) that is in place. Indeed, students may find strong critics of General Education among their instructors.

The induction of new faculty into a particular university community does not always include information about local General

Education options, goals, or requirements. Even when teaching General Education courses, faculty may not know what the General Education goals are for that course, how that course fits into the General Education program, or what requirement the course meets. Though the implementation of General Education may rest with faculty, their priorities—and the priorities of their institution—usually lie elsewhere. Indeed, so unsupportive of General Education are some faculty that they do not want their courses designated as meeting General Education requirements: they do not want students enrolling in their courses out of something less than interest in the discipline itself.

Faculty members, then, are not necessarily contributing to students' understanding of the value of General Education. Indeed, at many large research universities, increasing numbers of faculty are not teaching General Education courses.

Instruction

Conditions and priorities at some research universities are resulting in the use of increasing numbers of graduate student teaching assistants and non-tenure-track instructors to teach General Education courses. This sends a message of institutional indifference to these courses. Further, at many research universities, the graduate students who teach may not systematically be provided with background on the institution's General Education goals and programs. They may not have a sense of how the courses they are teaching fit into a larger scheme.

The reward structure for faculty is based on their specialization, not for contributions to the General Education component of the undergraduate curriculum. Graduate students are under pressure to produce research, and teaching is not a natural priority for these specialists-in-training. For most, teaching is part of their funding arrangements with the department. General Education, it might be argued, is *no* instructor's natural priority.

It is well known that many General Education courses in the

largest research universities often enroll huge numbers of students. Some offer little or no opportunity for the personal engagement of students with faculty and peers in pursuing the course content. Savvy students get the message that discourse and contact with faculty in these courses are not important—and perhaps the course is not really important either.

General Education curricula

While there are various educational and political reasons for the particular General Education curriculum a university chooses, the goals are not always clear to students. Many General Education programs appear to be (indeed are) cobbled together, and the relationship between the goals and requirements is not always readily apparent. The requirements are not self-explanatory and the language of institutional explanations may be unfamiliar to many students. “Humanities” is a word that is not in the vocabularies of many first-year students; the connections between interpreting rhetoric or evaluating statistical analyses and critical citizenship are not easily made. It is also possible that while a curriculum may be well explained in texts the institution provides, students have not been engaged in studying those explanations.

At many universities, students may choose among a wide array of courses in many different departments that satisfy a single General Education requirement. Having so many choices makes connections between ends and means murkier still. For the student who has little prior experience with study of the arts, for example, it is not hard to imagine the confusion about how important this requirement may be if it can be accomplished by taking courses in art history, or dance, or landscape architecture, or music, or theater.

Students may interpret a complex and delphic scheme of General Education as evidence of institutional indifference when seen in comparison with the clarity of departmental requirements for a major.

Students tend to receive very clear information as to why they need to take certain courses in their major field of study. These courses are also taught by faculty who clearly understand the aims and practices of their own disciplines and who can communicate these aims and practices to their students. This kind of pedagogical clarity is usually lacking in the General Education curriculum because there is no real consensus among faculty members as to what General Education is or how it should be taught.

M. GREGORY KENDRICK

When the ends and means are not clear and students find it hard to understand the purposes of General Education, it is not surprising that they should take up the “checklist” mentality and view the list as a set of hurdles. The fact that requirements are packaged in terms of credits or units also allows the General Education experience to exist as a series to be “checked off.”

It has been argued that the structures of some General Education curricula isolate it from the rest of a student’s academic experience, so that students do not experience the connections between General Education and the rest of their education. They are not necessarily called upon to use their skills, or to apply, extend, and refine what they have learned, as they continue on their educational paths. This reinforces the student’s sense that General Education courses are irrelevant.

Information about General Education

It seemed clear to us that in many universities it is difficult both to determine where students are learning about General Education and to find its natural advocates. The failure of students to understand *why General Education matters* is foreshadowed in the information (or lack thereof) research universities provide to students in publications, orientation programs, and in contacts with advisers, teachers, and other university personnel.

In a marketing culture, where it has become commonplace for admissions offices to approach students (and their families) as

customers, recruitment materials tout specialization, not General Education. When students and families are understood as consumers to be courted and pleased, it is not surprising that marketing materials would de-emphasize requirements that may involve study in fields in which the student is not interested or that may not appear to contribute to future professional success. They are not drawn to a rhetoric of lofty goals of general personal enrichment, citizenship, or studying for the love of learning or studying what one loves.

Undergraduate bulletins typically explain the goals and requirements of General Education, but this information is a small part of a large and complex document. Even special publications expressly devoted to General Education are not necessarily effective in helping students appreciate it as a valuable and central part of an undergraduate education or in making them eager to undertake it. These very documents may present a set of requirements as a checklist, perhaps inadvertently reinforcing the “checklist” mentality.

Orientation programs and other activities that introduce students to the culture of the university do not typically emphasize General Education. Even when they do include it as a topic, there is such an information overload at this time that the messages are not always effective. Students’ understanding of collegiate life is informed not only by these introductory activities but also by their residential experience. Residential life programs at most large research universities focus on social and behavioral issues; there is little or no programmatic emphasis on academic life, let alone on General Education.

Even in the most serious conversation about academic options, choices, and plans—the advising interview—the goals of General Education may well not be discussed. Advisers are not necessarily trained to understand the institutional General Education aims and programs, do not necessarily have a commitment to the goals of General Education, and indeed, with many other interests and concerns to address, may share the “just get it done” attitude of students.

While there are certainly many exceptions, faculty do not typically discuss General Education with students in their classes or in advising (they are, after all, specialists *in a discipline*). They do not necessarily know the student's status in meeting General Education "requirements" (let alone goals). It is typically from the registrar (or, increasingly, a self-initiated electronic audit) that the students know what is "missing."

The presentations and discussions at the first meeting of the symposium all pointed to the conclusion that in balancing their mission of research and specialization with a commitment to General Education, research universities place a heavy emphasis on the former. General Education is not a high or natural priority for many, and perhaps most, members of the academic community. Yet, at the same time, institutions advance a philosophy and rhetoric that call for a robust emphasis on General Education, and they do so for the weightiest of reasons: freedom, democracy, and opportunity.

PART TWO

Having illuminated some of the sources of students' attitudes about General Education, particularly those complexities within research universities that tip the balance decidedly toward research and specialization, the symposium members looked at steps universities might take to equalize that balance and support an academic culture that reaffirms General Education. We examined university programs, structures, and policies, and looked at how universities communicate with those outside the institution about General Education. We also looked at some exemplary practices for promoting and sustaining General Education. Certain themes emerged again and again, and we have intentionally allowed them to be repeated since they are central to the task.

We will deal only with those issues over which universities have some power to influence change. We have ordered the topics first on factors outside the universities, but in which universities do have reasons to communicate about their academic purposes and programs. Here we deal with university communications with the public and students' families as well as prospective students and high school personnel. Then we consider the experience

of students as they become engaged in such important aspects of university life as orientations, academic advising, and residential life. Finally we look at academic structures, policies, instruction, and courses. We briefly analyze and offer recommendations for each topic. These essays were written by individual symposium participants and modified as we collaboratively sought both explanation and recommendations.

The tensions and complexities both within and outside research universities are not transparent matters that lend themselves to facile prescriptions. These tensions promote the dynamic discourse in higher education about goals, priorities, and responsibilities. As we navigate complex questions, we acknowledge that they are open to many interpretations. Each of us brought a particular understanding of these matters to the conversation, so our opinions varied on how these recommendations might be prioritized. We wanted all points of view to be included, while at the same time we realized that various recommendations might make more sense for some institutions than for others.

FAMILIES AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Going to college is an important cultural transaction in our society. We only enroll students, but as one of our colleagues says, it is families that apply to college and families, in a sense, that attend. We need to recognize that private institutions at least depend upon this fact to finance their existence. Because families apply and attend, we feel that our practice of asking families to pay is justified. Evidently, we owe families a statement of our case.

Everyone who sends a child to college, and every student who comes to college, experiences to a greater or lesser extent the ambiguous mixture of purposes that animate higher education in our society. We identify at least three such purposes: (1) the practical purpose (research and training for employment), (2) the cultural/status purpose (college attendance is a class-dividing ritual, like high school was a century ago), and (3) the cultural/educational purpose. Students and their families come to us with all

these purposes; in other words, consciously or unconsciously, they come to us with mixed motives. We, of course, compound the ambiguity by having the same amalgam of purposes and motives in our institutions.

General Education and liberal education are among the institutional practices that occupy the cultural/educational part of higher education. We need to keep this in mind when thinking about how to advance the cause of General Education to families and the general public. Practicality and status can promote themselves. Only we can speak for general and liberal education.

The burden of making the case for general and liberal education falls first of all on the faculty and academic leaders who practice it. We must create a public voice for the practices of higher education that are cultural and intellectual. We need to speak of what we do as something that is good within itself and that, considered as a whole, is constitutive of a good life in the way that Aristotle defined it. But for the sake of the integrity and the effectiveness of our message, we should remember that General Education is countercultural. When our message becomes easy or uncontroversial, we can be sure that we have got it wrong.

In this context we want to mention that, while they are valued voices, the burden of advocacy for General Education must not be left to associations such as the American Association of Colleges & Universities or the Boyer Commission.¹³ Such advocacy, however important, cannot replace careful reflection on institutional purpose. The authoritative voice belongs to those who, in practice, put themselves on the line.

Recommendations

- ▶ At the stage of recruiting and admissions, we must be bold and speak frankly of intellectual life. In particular, we ought to say explicitly that college is an opportunity to develop a life of the mind and that we offer the kind of community and the kind of curriculum in which that life can be learned and lived and

its habits acquired for a lifetime. These habits are not for everyone any more than a career in biomedical research or chemical engineering is for everyone, but they are open to all and they are not a pursuit that precludes pursuing other ends either in college or beyond. Of course, for some they can be a full-time commitment. We should make this case in all our promotional communications, just as our recruiters, faculty, and alumni can, but, most important, our curricula must communicate this message so that our promotional material, both print- and Web-based, is driven by curriculum and not the other way around.

- ▶ Our career-services offices must be alert to the needs of students who are not educating themselves in a strictly vocational way. A colleague at The University of Chicago likes to say that we do not educate a student for the first six months to a year after college, or even for the first job, but for the decades to come. Thus, the challenge for career services is to fashion an enterprise with multiple benefits.
- ▶ Parents and families have invested their savings in their students' education, and they have invested a great deal of trust in us that we will initiate and support programs that will include them in the university enterprise. We, in turn, should invest in events such as Parent Weekends and these events should have academic substance. Let parents as well as students benefit from firsthand experience with general and liberal education. Students whose parents support their aspirations are usually easier to advise and educate.
- ▶ We should raise awareness of academic events as well as the achievements of our students and faculty by publicizing them in university magazines, newspapers, and on our Web sites to which families and the public have access.
- ▶ Our alumni are an important part of the public, and we need to reach them through articles that highlight General Education in our alumni magazines.

- ▶ We should reach out to the public via op-ed pieces by academic leaders that reinforce the value of General Education.
- ▶ We should invite the public to participate in our academic life, showcasing general and liberal studies that contribute to the quality of life. The University of Chicago, for example, has an annual Humanities Open House that brings in people from the community to lectures and seminars with faculty. And at Princeton, members of the public may sit in on some of the larger General Education courses through a Community Auditing Program. Alumni and the general public are a potential constituency for a lifetime of general and liberal education, and bringing liberal education to adults may be a valuable contribution to society in the future.

In the long term, research universities may become less competitive as providers of practical education. Indeed, proprietary operations and distance-learning arrangements could overtake the research university on that front. But as educators offering the face-to-face experience of liberal learning, we can survive and flourish.

HIGH SCHOOLS AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

Universities often have not been effective in explaining General Education in publications and presentations targeted at high school staff and students. Usually, communications between universities and high schools are about admission standards and requirements and not about curricular matters, including General Education. As we noted earlier, many admissions offices are primarily marketing enterprises. Their messages to prospective students may not even mention General Education. Instead they seek to attract “customers” by highlighting a wide range of options for specialization and career training and providing enticing images of collegiate life.

Further, many students are entering universities with the idea that they have already had a General Education in high school,

and particularly through Advanced Placement courses. They may believe there is nothing to be gained by expending time and effort on additional courses in this part of the curriculum. While it is not clear how most high schools explain General Education when the subject does come up with their students, we do know that many high schools, especially the best ones, see General Education as simply repeating their own curricula. Until there is more communication and conversation between high schools and universities, each may continue to misunderstand the other.

As high school teachers and counselors focus on helping their students gain entry to colleges and universities, they are likely to promote transcripts heavily weighted with Advanced Placement courses and even local college courses. (These courses not only enhance their prospects for admission but often will help them meet some of the General Education requirements when they matriculate.) Most universities accept AP credits, and many allow them as substitutions for General Education requirements. This of course reinforces the idea that General Education is not as important as the other work one *must* do on campus. A prevalent attitude is that the most ambitious students can get many General Education courses or requirements “out of the way” before they even reach the campus.

Universities need to articulate clearly why liberal and general studies are valuable. The more we are able to communicate the importance of General Education through admissions and recruiting materials, the more successful we will be in educating students once they matriculate. We must demonstrate to them that college ought to be more than an efficient step on the way to a career.

Recommendations

- ▶ Universities, particularly state universities, could establish a dialogue with state high schools about General Education. Both should be made aware of each other’s position. In fact, students should gain from their high school teachers and

counselors an understanding of *why* university education includes general studies. Such a dialogue might even inform curriculum development.

- ▶ Universities should carefully evaluate the role of high school education in General Education at their institution. The faculty at UCLA, for example, recently voted to modify the General Education curriculum, and all science departments and many others as well have decided not to accept AP credits as a substitute for their General Education courses. At Stanford, AP credits may not satisfy General Education requirements.
- ▶ Universities should be bold and clear in making prominent statements about the aims of General Education in the context of a research university setting in their admissions viewbooks and promotional material. A university should not be shy about acknowledging that it believes students should choose certain kinds of courses *outside* their major and *in addition to* their electives. Soliciting testimonials from current students and faculty about General Education courses and including them in all promotional material will enhance and strengthen the message. Alumni, who often come to view General Education as an essential and important part of their undergraduate experience, could provide statements as well.
- ▶ There should be collaboration between faculty and offices of admission. The faculty's view of the aims of the General Education curriculum should be integrated into presentations and publications that admissions offices direct toward prospective students and families. At a minimum, the staff of the admissions office should be educated about the university's General Education program and its goals.
- ▶ The Web pages of admissions offices should include easy-to-locate links to General Education sites where students will find clearly articulated goals of General Education and its place in the wider curriculum.

ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

Orientation programs present a unique opportunity for university leaders to communicate with new students and their parents about General Education. The first day of college is indeed a “once in a lifetime” experience. This privileged moment tempts all members of the University community to reach out to the new students, to be the first to get their message across. You only get one chance to make a first impression.

For educators promoting the goals and purposes of General Education, orientation establishes a context and environment for undergraduates as they approach their first courses of study. Formal ceremonies symbolically mark the rite of passage into the university and offer occasions to reflect on the liberating powers of human knowledge and intellectual life. Presidents and chancellors offer official greetings and celebrate the arrival of the newest members of the community of scholars.

Even though their purpose is to inspire, speeches and addresses must compete for the full attention of the new students and their parents. Pressing practical and emotional concerns tend to crowd out thoughtful deliberation about lofty educational matters. At residential campuses, for example, parents are consumed with the logistics of moving their children into the residence halls, while students are anxious about adjusting to new surroundings and peers as well as to their newfound independence. For both students and parents, sheer exhaustion—from the emotional challenges of separation and the physical demands of moving—can dampen their enthusiasm for any activities that demand intellectual engagement.

Orientation programs can meet this challenge directly. We should resist the temptation to include as many voices in the program as time permits. A coordinated approach demands a clearly designated university officer with the authority to moderate among competing interests that want a “piece of the action” and to ensure that the messages are coherent in articulating the values that accurately reflect institutional priorities.

An overwhelming number and variety of activities can dull the sharpness of any one message.

Orientation activities should seek to personalize the goals of General Education and, wherever possible, should involve parents and students in interactive discourse. Inspirational talks for hundreds or thousands can be complemented by small group discussions led by faculty members and peers. These activities translate rhetoric into meaningful communication, bringing ideas to life through engagement with readings and personal conversations.

Another approach is to construct academic advising sessions to raise questions such as, “What is liberal education? How are you planning to achieve this educational goal? Why is this important to you?” These questions begin to introduce the useful distinction between General Education as a set of course requirements leading to an academic degree and General Education as an intellectual agenda. The goal is for students to begin practicing the skills of reflection and self-awareness as part of planning their undergraduate education.

In preparation for Orientation, universities have an opportunity to involve many constituencies in a dialogue about General Education. Everyone who communicates with new students should be a reliable source of information. Ideally, everyone should believe in the values of General Education and understand the ways in which the institution demonstrates its commitment to these values.

In conclusion, a caveat: Orientation programs that elevate the rhetoric of General Education run the risk of breeding cynicism among new students and their parents if the educational experiences that follow fail to live up to the rhetoric, or if upper-class students scoff at the message. For research universities, the challenge is to organize an Orientation that acknowledges the central position of General Education while respecting the research mission of the university. Universities should be forthright about competing educational goals and philosophies, recognizing that productive tensions can make education a dynamic and challenging process.

Recommendations

- ▶ Orientation organizers should enlist the most eloquent and forceful speakers to the task of delivering talks to new students about General Education, and complement formal speeches with opportunities for discussion of the ideas. An example of such a program is the “Aims of Education Address” at The University of Chicago, which is followed by faculty and student discussions in the residence halls.
- ▶ Programs should be structured not only to benefit the new students and their parents but also to serve the needs of the academic community around issues of General Education. For example, at Stanford University organizers of Orientation programs foster a sense of identity and purpose among the faculty members who lead sessions for new students by bringing them together to develop a consistent approach to their task. Such meetings help individual faculty see where a particular course fits into the overall scheme of General Education and provide a philosophical context for the practical introduction to the curriculum.
- ▶ We should promote individual and group reflection about educational goals and how they apply to an undergraduate program of study. At Harvard University, students read a collection of short essays by professors on such topics as “Free Expression in a Diverse Society,” “The Cosmopolitan Scholar,” and “The ‘New’ Liberal Education.” Discussions on these readings begin to build a sense of intellectual community around themes central to General Education. At the summer counseling and advising program at Penn State, students and parents receive a pamphlet explaining why General Education is important and watch a video presentation in which students talk about the place of General Education in a university education. Afterward, students meet with advisers in small groups to discuss how the issues raised might be applied to constructing an educational plan.

The very nature of research universities makes it difficult to advise students about the central place of General Education in their studies, since faculty are often the ones to whom this responsibility falls. Specialized in their disciplines and rewarded for their scholarly productivity, faculty do not share a common understanding of General Education or how it should be taught. Not surprisingly, most faculty at research institutions view academic advising as a distraction or, even worse, an imposition. With our faculties' allegiance owed first to highly autonomous academic departments and communities of scholars beyond our campuses, faculty remain insulated from the larger institutional goals that include General Education. To these observations we might add that there is little motivation on the part of faculty to change. And faced with an array of major challenges, our institutions are not likely to restructure systems of academic advising to accommodate the faculty, especially in the recent times of sharp budgetary constraints.

Academic advising at research institutions takes many forms and promoting the significance of General Education becomes a serious challenge. At some of our institutions we continue to employ the familiar, but unsatisfactory, model of apportioning incoming and transfer students to faculty who have been recruited, and perhaps even coerced, to the task. These students stay with the assigned advisers until they declare a major. Students and advisers participate in the annual progression of orientation meetings, individual meetings, and irregular follow-up sessions. Other institutions have advising centers, some with professional advisers and others who use selected and remunerated faculty, that maintain central files and academic information. In these models, students seek assistance as needed or as scheduled. Still other schools have some combination of the two programs. In Arts and Sciences at the University of Virginia, for example, some faculty serve as undergraduate academic deans for approximately one thousand students. They coordinate the efforts of

fifteen to twenty faculty advisers and respond promptly to the academic concerns of students, faculty, and parents.

Students arrive on our campuses with very mixed messages about higher education and questions about their own educational pursuits. They soon encounter an institutional dissonance about General Education and promptly learn that faculty have priorities other than academic advising. Often the faculty themselves are of different minds about General Education. We are all familiar with at least one of the by-products of this arrangement between advisers and our youngest students: the emphasis on the utilitarian “checklist” of required courses, which is preliminary to the real business at hand—the selection of a major and a plan for the preparation for a career. Whatever the formal structure, students generally have a low opinion of academic advising. No one is surprised to find in surveys that other students are the most widely used source of academic advising. Faculty priorities and department cultures are not likely to change; neither are faculty likely to advise students differently just because someone asks them to think more broadly about education. To advance General Education through academic advising, we must devise strategies that make better use of our available resources and find creative new ways to reach our students.

Recommendations

- ▶ General Education is common to the very purpose of our research institutions. Because change starts from the top, the president, provost, and deans should reiterate the principles and purposes of General Education at every opportunity. Acknowledging this conviction and commitment must be part of the public discourse and not just part of the mission statement in our catalogs or repeated formally during periodic accreditation renewal. When our highest educational officials talk about the issues of General Education, it becomes much easier for advisers and faculty to do so too. Talk and advocacy of course are not sufficient. Someone in a highly visible

position or office who has a budget and accountability should embody the institution's commitment to General Education.

- ▶ There is much to be said for raising the visibility of General Education in all aspects of academic advising. Advisers need to understand the broad context of General Education within which they counsel students, but given the ways our faculties are motivated and department cultures firmly entrenched, training advisers is not the only answer, and certainly not even an easy one. We should review and revise our promotional materials, both printed and Web-based; we can explore how best to use the new information technologies; and we should encourage faculty to address the issue in class.

There are some encouraging initiatives to note. Advising in the General Education Clusters program at UCLA, with the opportunity for many kinds of programming as background, seems promising. Faculty who teach in that program are deeply involved in the development and delivery of these General Education courses and are uniquely prepared and situated to advise students in the clusters about General Education. At Penn State, the Division of Undergraduate Studies has been conducting discussions with their professional advisers about taking General Education beyond the “checklist.” As part of this effort, advisers have developed a series of questions that have successfully drawn students into broader discussions about General Education.

- ▶ In cases in which the goals of General Education are obscured by arcane or complex curricular requirements, simplifying the curriculum would serve to illuminate those goals—for both advisers and students.
- ▶ University orientation could be expanded to include a semester-long course. Going to college has become more complicated than in the past. For example, students need an introduction to the campus and student organizations, they need to become familiar with standards of conduct and honor guidelines, they

need to know about issues of health and safety, and they need to become familiar with libraries and other research facilities. Summer orientations, which often serve as a beginning of these conversations, need to be continued and strengthened. Numerous institutions have moved to a credit-bearing course (often called a First Year Seminar) as the way to broaden the orientation process. Institutions with such courses have a ready mechanism at hand for including important content about General Education.

- ▶ University career-services units could assist advisers in making the General Education argument. Many offices at our institutions already track the early career paths of graduates. To counter the prevalent sense among students that the value of learning is determined by the entry-level or immediate post-graduate success of students, we could solicit and display statements supportive of General Education from the employers who seek our students. Similarly, our affiliated medical and law schools could provide endorsements for the broad kinds of learning upon which their professional instruction is based.
- ▶ Our alumni are important allies in our mission because they recognize more than most groups the challenges and satisfaction of a balanced life well led rather than merely attaining success within a particular field or profession. Alumni, like employers, could be recruited to offset the majority view that the measure of a successful college education is best taken by the career choices students make upon graduation. Especially valuable would be the support of people who are both alumni *and* employers.

RESIDENTIAL LIFE

Residential life programs are important centers of student learning and have the potential to help student residents learn about General Education. The general mission of Residential Life units is to support and enhance the students' education, complementing

the academic mission of the institution by creating environments that support students in their academic lives. Some universities, particularly private ones, have resident faculty house mentors who help establish an academic environment. Living-learning communities do this as well. However, units are faced with many responsibilities and obstacles that hinder the development of intellectual and curricular activities within residential programming. Social programming is important, and students welcome such activities that offer a break from the classroom and library and lab, where they expect serious intellectual engagement.

The governing and reporting structure presents another obstacle to the development of academic activities. In many universities, residential life staff report through the student affairs division. As a result, the priorities, goals, and desired outcomes of residential life programs may not benefit from the influence of academic units or administrators. In many cases, the interaction between the student-affairs side of the community and the academic side of the community is limited, and in some cases there is a lack of understanding between the two.

Residential life units have important responsibilities for security, safety, discipline, and programming related to community-building, diversity, and social conduct, as well as problems such as sexual assault and substance abuse. These responsibilities are distinct from the academic realm or the curriculum. Although there is certainly some variation among institutions, the academic programming responsibilities of a typical Resident Assistant (RA) might be limited to sponsoring programs on study-skills or test anxiety or facilitating study groups or partners.

This gap is now being bridged in many universities as the possibilities for fruitful collaboration have become better defined. The number and variety of living-learning communities in residence halls has grown in recent years and many of them are based on academic interests. These communities may be based on specific interests in a major or a general field, say, psychology or engineering. While faculty members may be involved in these communities in some way, usually they act as representatives of a

particular major or field and reinforce the message of a particular discipline. Their focus is specialization, not General Education.

Recommendations

- ▶ Residence staff training, particularly for RAs, who have the most direct contact with students, should include instruction that helps them understand the General Education program of the university, as well as its purposes and structure.
- ▶ To begin a dialogue on possibilities, universities could create a structure that involves substantive and ongoing conversation between the staff of residence halls and academic personnel, with a view to collaborating to help students achieve a better understanding of and appreciation for General Education. The University of Washington has recently begun just such a conversation. At Stanford, peer academic coordinators live in residence halls with freshmen and are part of the residential staff. They coordinate academic (including General Education) information sessions and work with advisers and with peer advisers in the residence.
- ▶ Residential colleges or residence hall activities should include some academic programs with faculty or advisers that focus on General Education. In most research universities, all or most of the first-year students live in residence halls; first-year students are also in the process of defining their university lives and are the group most receptive to what university life has to offer. Programs of this kind could help them adopt a more generous view of General Education and its role in their whole education.
- ▶ Residential college or residence hall programming should include some activities that highlight various campus programs and complement the aims of General Education. For example—and, again, particularly with first-year students—encouraging group attendance at artistic events or public lectures will help reinforce the importance of General Education

experiences that are outside the classroom or laboratory. Such programs can prove to students that educational activities can indeed be part of one's social life.

This early induction into a culture of academic activities may also help set patterns of participation. The Division of Undergraduate Studies, the unit of enrollment for exploratory students entering Penn State, in close collaboration with the Office of Residential Life, established DISCOVER House, a living-learning community for first-year students based on the themes of academic exploration and the values of General Education. Programs in the house (with faculty, advisers, and other guests) and on campus (lectures, artistic events) and off (community service, educational trips) directly relate to General Education as a central component of a university education.

- ▶ UCLA has plans to conduct the Cluster Classes part of its General Education program in the residential life area of campus. In addition to the classes, the faculty office hours, tutorials, social events, and extracurricular activities (such as film series) will also be held in the residence halls. At The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the new South Campus dormitories include classroom spaces designed specifically to be used for First Year Seminars. These arrangements can bring General Education “home” and make it a part of students' everyday living.

INSTRUCTORS

Those who teach General Education courses—tenure-track faculty, graduate teaching assistants, and fixed-term instructors—must accept some responsibility for the failure of students to understand the curricular goals of the research university, even if the sources of the problem are multiple and complex. Instructors often fail to discuss the goals of General Education in the classroom or explain how their course might help students achieve them. Syllabi, Web pages, introductory lectures, and assignments

rarely identify the place of the course in the overall curricular structure. And in interactions with students outside the classroom, instructors do not do much better. When they serve as directors of undergraduate studies or advisers for majors, faculty do not adequately explain how study-in-depth builds on the skills, knowledge, and habits of mind that General Education courses cultivate.

Any satisfying analysis of General Education needs to excavate the multiple layers of institutional, departmental, and professional obstacles. Many instructors do not seem to *understand* the goals of General Education, so it is not surprising that they are unable to present them clearly and persuasively. That is true even at institutions with a long tradition of distinguished teaching in General Education. For example, if evidence from a study at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (North Carolina) is any indication of national patterns—and we think it is—the lack of understanding is widespread. While the results were remarkably positive for General Education in most ways, a survey of the 323 instructors (60 percent faculty and 40 percent TAs) who taught a General Education course in spring 2001 at North Carolina found that four out of ten reported they had not read the description of the General Education curriculum in the *Undergraduate Bulletin*, and they received little information from their chairs and colleagues upon their arrival or in subsequent years.¹⁴

More than one-third of the instructors surveyed said they had not received *any* information about the goals of the General Education curriculum. Only 14 percent said they had a “very clear understanding” of that curriculum, and 8 percent of the tenure-track and fixed-term faculty and 25 percent of the TAs did not even know which requirement their course fulfilled. Among those who could identify their course’s place in the wider curricular plan, only half of those offering courses designed to introduce students to “perspectives” on a field of knowledge said they “definitely emphasized” a disciplinary method in the class. The 5,785 undergraduates surveyed at North Carolina that spring confirmed that their teachers had not played an important role in

communicating the goals of General Education. Only 17 percent said they received information about the curriculum from course instructors.

If instructors do not fully understand the goals of General Education, it is not surprising that many fail to fully *endorse* those goals, or that they at least continue to emphasize specialization—for themselves and their students. For example, in an anonymous written comment on the 2001 survey at North Carolina, one instructor vividly and succinctly expressed opposition in response to a question seeking advice about how the university might revise General Education: “Back away from turning UNC into the world’s largest high school.” Even if the overwhelming majority of instructors at research universities report that they value the skills and knowledge that General Education aims to provide, there are oppositional voices and counter-impulses on most campuses.

In turn, the faculty’s ambivalence about General Education has other local and national sources: the institution’s and the profession’s reward system and identity formation. Most tenure-track faculty and graduate teaching assistants foreground research as they imagine their professional identity, and the reward systems in their professional societies and universities emphasize research and writing, even if both types of institutions make attempts to celebrate teaching proficiency. Excellence in research remains the primary criterion for receiving honors and awards in a professional society and promotions and raises in the research university. And even if societies and universities reward teaching, rarely is it specified as a contribution to General Education. Nor is there a shared sense of identity among General Education instructors.

Recommendations

- ▶ The goals of General Education, and of each component of the curriculum, should be clearly stated in the university’s undergraduate bulletin and other printed and online sources for faculty and students. If they are not, instructors cannot communicate them effectively to students. For example, an

instructor who is designing a course that meets a requirement for philosophical analysis should be able to consult a comprehensive set of goals for this component of the General Education curriculum.

- ▶ We suggest that all official documents (appointment letters, faculty handbooks, orientation materials, and departmental guidelines) clearly communicate the goals of General Education to faculty at recruitment, hiring, orientation, promotion, and post-tenure review. At the same time, to assure that communication goes both ways, the administrator in charge of General Education should regularly solicit faculty opinion about the curriculum and their role in it, both in formal standing committees that are charged to review and assess courses and initiatives and by other, more informal means.
- ▶ To foster a shared sense of identity and purpose among instructors, institutions might hold receptions, organize workshops, designate spaces, manage online discussions, endow chairs, and give teaching awards for General Education. It is not enough to have resources and awards for undergraduate teaching, a broad phrase that does not highlight General Education. To enhance coherence and commonality, institutions can designate some awards, resources, and events specifically and exclusively for faculty who teach General Education. For example, in one experiment designed to increase a common sense of identity for those who teach General Education courses to freshmen, in fall 2002 the University of Washington will identify a core group of faculty as instructors of the first year.
- ▶ The rewards for teaching excellence in General Education can include not only carefully targeted teaching awards and endowed chairs, but the university's commitment can be inscribed in all department, college, and university documents about promotion and tenure. We recommend that the phrase "contributions to General Education," or its equivalent, be added, and that tenure committees and department chairs be

required to comment explicitly on that criterion in every formal assessment of tenure-track faculty members.

- ▶ Since teaching assistants and fixed-term instructors teach so many of the basic courses in communication skills, quantitative analysis, and foreign language, they must be included in any attempt to improve communication to students about General Education. For some good reasons, they often seem to know less about the goals of General Education. To remedy this, we recommend orientations and workshops aimed specifically at these instructors. The University of Wisconsin–Madison works toward this end by providing its teaching assistants with information about the university curriculum and how General Education fits into it. Stanford, UCLA, and The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill all provide orientations and workshops for those graduate students who are teaching within their General Education initiatives and programs. Some universities might even require these meetings for all instructors, including tenure-track faculty, who teach General Education. Where the orientations or workshops are voluntary, institutions might offer an honorarium to increase participation among TAs and instructors.
- ▶ The syllabi and Web pages for all General Education courses should clearly describe how the course meets the goals of the curriculum. (Course Web pages might also include links to online descriptions of relevant components of the General Education curriculum.) A faculty subcommittee on General Education might review and assess syllabi (and accompanying justifications) for all courses that meet the requirements. To ensure consistency over time as courses already on the books change in approach and content, a systematic review of existing General Education courses, including a review of the syllabi, might be mandated every few years. In that way, the administrator responsible for coordinating General Education can encourage instructors to include some account of the goals of General Education on their own syllabi.

- ▶ At the first class meeting, and later as appropriate, instructors should briefly explain the relevant goals of General Education and how the course fits into the overall curricular plan. And as the course progresses, they might point out when a writing assignment, artistic creation, or laboratory experiment relates directly to some specific goal of General Education. In a more ambitious attempt to address the problem, institutions might consider Penn State's experiment: in 2000–2001 and 2001–2002, the Division of Undergraduate Studies supported faculty members to incorporate the study of the role of General Education in colleges and universities into the curriculum of several required first-year courses (English Composition, Speech Communication, a First Year Seminar, and an introductory humanities course). Penn State found that this strategy did indeed alter students' understanding and appreciation for General Education.
- ▶ Departmental faculty who serve as directors of undergraduate studies or advisers for majors should do all they can to ensure that oral and written communication with majors addresses the relation between General Education and study-in-depth. Such communications can clarify how specialization in that major builds on (and extends) skills and knowledge gained in General Education.
- ▶ Communications to undergraduates are both explicit and implicit, and the university sends implicit but clear signals about its values in its choice of instructors. For economic reasons, most research universities will continue to use large numbers of graduate teaching assistants and fixed-term instructors for General Education courses, especially instruction in basic skills. However, institutions can signal their high esteem for General Education by recruiting their most distinguished researchers and teachers to do their part for General Education.
- ▶ Finally, a lack of interest on the part of instructors in teaching

General Education courses that results in lackluster teaching signals to students that the course is not important. Every step should be taken to ensure that engaging pedagogy is practiced in General Education courses. Given students' already reluctant participation, it falls to instructors to enliven and inspire them, to make the work so interesting that they will relish the General Education experience.

**DEPARTMENTAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE MESSAGES TO
FACULTY**

From the moment they set foot in graduate school until the day they receive tenure, faculty members at research institutions have been told by both their departments and university administrations that if they want to succeed in academe they must conduct research, publish, and teach in a specialized field of knowledge. Indeed, the whole system of rewards, promotions, power, and patronage within a research university is directly tied to the contributions that a faculty member makes to his or her discipline and department. To be sure, research universities acknowledge the importance of university and community service, and faculty do indeed engage in activities that contribute to this part of their overall portfolio, but in the end it is a successful record of publication in one's field that ensures tenure and promotion.

General Education does not figure prominently in this formula for academic success in the research university. To a large degree, this is because the generalized subject material and non-specialized student audiences of most General Education courses neither advance faculty research agendas nor bring them into contact with their department's undergraduate and graduate majors. Moreover, department and university-wide administrators are aware of this fact and they tend to be reticent about pressing their faculty to participate actively in a part of the curriculum that will do little to assist them in acquiring tenure and promotion. Rather than take such a step, most department chairs mete out their General Education to graduate students and part-time

lecturers, who often have little interest in either the content or overall purpose of these courses. In the end, the effect of such hiring practices underscores the message that General Education is an unimportant part of the curriculum.

Faculty interest in General Education is also dampened by a lack of consensus on the part of department and university administrations as to what General Education actually is and how it should be taught. While both of these groups tend to agree that General Education courses constitute a form of university and community service, there are often profound differences of opinion as to what this service actually entails. University offices charged with campus-wide instruction, for example, tend to tout General Education courses as the vehicle through which students should be exposed to a range of instructional “best practices” aimed at helping them realize more thoughtful lives. Departments, however, are more likely to view their General Education curriculum as a collection of large lecture “bread and butter” courses that are meant to attract majors and secure a certain amount of credit production. The end result of this pedagogical dissonance is often a vast, accumulated, and overly complex set of courses that lack coherence to students and faculty alike.

Finally, even when university administrations and departments concur on the purpose and practice of their General Education curriculum, they often cannot provide faculty with the kinds of tangible incentives that might engage them in General Education teaching. In the end, research universities hire and reward faculty for pursuing promising lines of intellectual inquiry and providing excellent instruction in their discipline. If we expect faculty members to forgo those activities in the interest of teaching General Education, then university administrations and departments must also offer them the course releases, stipends, and credit toward tenure and promotion that they receive for their work as researchers and teachers in their respective fields.

Ultimately, university administrations and departments will have to address, in one way or another, all of the aforementioned problems if they are to succeed in getting their faculty to

participate in General Education. Specifically, they will need to take substantive steps to change the widespread perception among faculty that General Education lacks purpose, does little to advance academic careers, and saddles its instructors with service work that is neither valued nor properly remunerated. The experiences of many of us at this symposium indicate that the attempt to achieve these ends is time-consuming, arduous, and not inexpensive.

Recommendations

- ▶ Perhaps the easiest way to get department chairs and their faculty colleagues to take General Education seriously is to secure a measure of support from some of the principal players in a university's central administration. Efforts to engage faculty in General Education initiatives were successful at UCLA and Stanford University precisely because a number of the top administrative officials, upon assuming office, made the strengthening of the General Education curriculum one of their top priorities.
- ▶ A key advantage in securing high-level administrative support for General Education reform is that chancellors, presidents, provosts, and deans can single-handedly promote General Education by appointing blue-ribbon work groups of department chairs, faculty, and student representatives to examine the General Education curriculum and make broad recommendations for its improvement. If one is lucky, this deliberative process will produce a bold and provocative proposal that transforms General Education into a matter of campus-wide concern and debate.

Perhaps the best example of how this works is the one provided by UCLA's decade-long General Education reform effort. In the 1990s, the provost of the College of Letters and Science appointed a faculty/student work group to examine the General Education curriculum. This group reported back that the university's General Education program was in need of

thoroughgoing reform and called for a new curriculum that would be centered on inquiry-based learning, seminars, interdisciplinary work, and first-year clusters. These recommendations, in turn, became the focal point of a campus-wide discussion that helped to make General Education a significant issue for UCLA faculty.

- ▶ The campus community must be engaged in a dialogue about the role of General Education in a research university. Lacking a far-reaching proposal for change, perhaps the easiest way to achieve this aim is to sponsor campus-wide forums that are focused on the intellectual aims, practices, and *importance* of General Education. Most of the institutions represented at this symposium have taken this approach and have been successful in securing funding to support these forums from private organizations such as the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.
- ▶ While discussion about the role of General Education in the research university is important, the provision of tangible rewards for teaching General Education courses is, ultimately, the critical factor in changing faculty attitudes. The institutions represented at this symposium have approached this problem in different ways. Stanford has created some twenty faculty positions that are directly tied to various initiatives aimed at improving their introductory undergraduate curriculum. UCLA's administration has allocated permanent funding for a number of General Education programs. This money allows administrators responsible for the curriculum to offer faculty course releases from departmental teaching responsibilities, summer salary for course development, graduate student instructor support, administrative assistance, budgets for social events and field trips, and public recognition for their participation in General Education initiatives.
- ▶ Most of our introductory communication, quantitative analysis, foreign language, and social science courses are taught by graduate student instructors, who often know little about the

goals of the General Education curriculum. Because these instructors are the future tenure-track faculty of our research universities, it is crucial that we take steps to educate them about the history, purpose, and aims of General Education.

- ▶ Finally, there appears to be considerable agreement that departments and their faculty will never take General Education seriously until some kind of central authority is given the responsibility for overseeing General Education on campus. Furthermore, that person or committee must be given ample authority to compel departments to review periodically their General Education offerings, as well as resources to support and reward innovative teaching and learning in General Education courses. A number of the universities represented at this symposium—The University of Wisconsin–Madison, UCLA, and Stanford—have enjoyed some measure of success in this area by establishing General Education oversight committees comprised of faculty, students, and staff.

While all of these strategies will improve our university General Education programs and reaffirm their importance to faculty members, we have also learned over the last decades that curricular reform is an ongoing, continually evolving process. In the end, both our effort to create new communities of learning for lower-division students and the institutional transformation that has accompanied that endeavor remain works-in-progress.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURES

Most research universities are organized academically around the two primary concepts of the department and the school or college. Academic work is largely carried out and rewarded through these structures. Thus, structuring for a university-wide General Education curriculum is handicapped from the outset. The identity of faculty and staff, the packaging of courses and curriculum, and the designation of where a student “belongs” all battle against the emergence of a clear voice on General Education matters.

Against this backdrop, there are further difficulties in that units vital to integrating students' in- and out-of-classroom experiences (libraries, residence halls, advising, and support programs) exist in yet another parallel structure set apart from the department and college.

Beyond this basic shape, research universities have widely varying institutional administrative structures, so there is no one-size-fits-all prescription that can be made about the General Education administrative structure that will be the most effective. While some research universities do have special "entry point" colleges that admit all or some of the incoming students, others have individual schools, colleges, and professional units (for example architecture, engineering, pharmacy) that directly admit incoming freshmen. Still others have a large college of liberal arts (or some version of Arts and Sciences) that serves as the academic "home" for many incoming students with varying academic goals at the same time that it serves as the locus of General Education courses.

A striking feature of the largest research universities is that they tend to be highly decentralized, regardless of the institutional administrative structure. Faculty governance and departmental autonomy are perhaps more in evidence in these institutions than in any other segment of higher education in the United States. While this is a direct result of the history of these institutions and the intellectual autonomy they prize, it also presents a challenge in structuring for university-wide General Education.

Individual faculty members in research universities are most often rewarded for their contributions to original research in specialized academic fields. The priority order for their efforts could be (roughly and with many exceptions) listed as (1) research in their discipline, (2) graduate student education, (3) education of majors in their discipline, and (4) general undergraduate education. Thus, even when a faculty member is active in the greater life of the university in a curricular and governance sense, this interest may not translate into devoting a significant amount of time or energy to the General Education mission of the university.

Graduate student teaching assistants and, increasingly, short-term non-tenure-track faculty are also involved in the General Education curriculum of research universities. While it is reasonable to expect that traditional faculty will have some level of commitment to the goals of the institution and an understanding of its General Education curriculum, the same may not be true for TAs and non-tenure-track instructors, who are in charge of many of the day-to-day classroom experiences of students in General Education courses.

As we have noted elsewhere, students present their own challenges when communicating about the importance of General Education at the university level—from feeling that they “already did this in high school” to wanting to jump into specialized majors that appear to them to be more important to career goals, to the extreme of simply not having received *any* exposure to General Education in their orientations, classroom work, or co-curricular experiences.

Recommendations

- ▶ At least one person or group on campus should have the responsibility for the oversight of General Education, and the position needs to have budgetary authority for at least some of the resources attached to the General Education program. Such a position will exist in different parts of the university depending on its overall administrative structure. It could be structured as a position in a college on campus that directly admits all freshmen, as a direct line report to a provost, or as part of another academic unit on campus, such as a liberal arts college, that has been delegated the authority for General Education. What is important is that someone with responsibility for General Education be present at the table when key administrative decisions are made.
- ▶ Faculty education, involvement, and commitment are key elements in advancing the General Education mission of the university. We seem to have reached consensus that, at the

broadest university level, there needs to be some sort of committee, faculty senate, or other body that is charged with the oversight of the General Education curriculum. Without this, the administrative structure will be ineffectual. As an example, The University of Wisconsin–Madison, has had a college-wide General Education Committee for several years. The Committee includes faculty and staff representatives from various disciplines and an undergraduate adviser as well as several members representing the General Education program. The Committee has been instrumental in developing a conception of a General Education program, in considering policy alternatives, and in serving as an advocate for the needs of the program.

- ▶ The administrative structure of General Education on a particular campus must be visible. Does the administrative structure allow for the flow of resources to such positions in a way that most advances the larger General Education program on the campus? Are there communication structures in place? Further, the administrative structure must provide clear incentives to faculty and their departments to participate. Such incentives may be mandatory consideration in tenure and merit decisions, departmental obligations to participate based on faculty lines, or other forms of clear recognition that the various levels of administration on a campus are willing to link resources to participation in the General Education program.
- ▶ The administrative structure needs to consider the role of graduate teaching assistants and short-term non-tenure-track instructors in the General Education curriculum. Making sure that instructors know what role their course plays in the larger curriculum can help inform teaching and provide a better idea of how students are benefiting from a given course.
- ▶ The administrative structure must be able to respond to the needs of academic advisers across the campus. This can be accomplished by providing a visible presence at meetings of

adviser groups and by giving advisers a forum in which their feedback on issues relating to General Education can be heard. Including advisers in a formal way (such as appointing an adviser to the key General Education committee) can stimulate a larger intellectual discussion of the intersect between the General Education curriculum and the way students experience it as they make their way through their undergraduate courses.

- ▶ The administrative structure for General Education needs to build links to several other parts of the university, such as the office of admissions, residence halls, the registrar's office, institutional research, and career counseling. It may be useful to form a General Education administrative group drawing from representatives from these offices so that (1) units across the campus are aware of the importance of General Education and (2) the institution's focus and "messages" on General Education are consistent. The University of Wisconsin–Madison had such a group that met regularly to work through myriad technical issues.
- ▶ How can the General Education administrative structure best communicate with students about the importance of General Education to their undergraduate experience? It can be argued that a single point of entry to the large research university, such as the General College at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill or the single undergraduate college at smaller institutions such as Chicago and Princeton, is the structure that best facilitates communication with students about General Education. These types of colleges provide a focus on General Education and locus for information and often coordinate curricula. Such a college is not preoccupied with specialization as, for example, a college of business might be. This is not the structure at most large research universities, so the administrators at those universities must provide faculty, other instructors, and advisers with the tools and commitment to articulate the importance of General Education directly to students.

The symposium participants agreed that none of the other categories of communication we discussed, whether to our high school students, families, faculty members, or the general public, and whether through advising, residential life, orientation, administrative structures, or university policies, matters one whit if General Education courses themselves fail to engage, provoke, and inspire our students. As one participant put it: “This issue captures the heart of the General Education challenge.”

In other words, the curriculum is where the rhetoric confronts the reality. It does not matter how effective the rhetoric is if the reality in the classroom does not measure up. But if the courses deliver a powerful educational experience, then General Education will thrive on campus regardless of how good or bad the public relations effort may be. Unfortunately, on many campuses, General Education curricula do not deliver.

As we discovered in our symposium discussions, a full diagnosis of the problem is complex. We will therefore focus here on what many believe to be the key problem with General Education courses: *they are required*. Required, interestingly, not only for students but often for teachers as well. Too frequently, neither the students nor the teacher wants to be in that classroom.

Several of us have observed that as long as General Education is a requirement, we will never escape the students’ “checklist” mentality. First-year students, finally liberated from the strictures of high school, are presented with a new set of requirements that constrain their choices, tell them what is “good” for them, and can be construed as a waste of both valuable time and money. General Education courses are regarded as the anteroom to a genuine college education. Our students, having survived high school, have a “been there, done that” attitude toward General Education.

The courses we offer too often reinforce those attitudes. Not just categories, but often specific courses are obligatory. General Education courses are often broad and introductory—too easy or

too remote from the “serious” part of the curriculum that will prepare students for a career. If the courses are skill-based (such as “communication” or “critical thinking”), they can seem unfocused and nonrigorous, even lacking in content. They cover material students “ought to know” rather than challenge and provoke them. Too often they are large lecture courses, with opportunities for discussion typically led by lecturers or graduate students. And requirements can be so unnecessarily complex and confusing, and their underlying principles and aims so poorly articulated, that it becomes apparent that General Education is not much of an institutional priority.

Teacher attitudes toward General Education courses can be just as negative. On most campuses, General Education is low-status labor. Beginning assistant professors, or non-tenure-track lecturers, or less successful teachers are assigned to teach General Education courses. The best researchers, who can pick and choose their specialized advanced and graduate courses, manage to stay away. Such courses are considered unglamorous “service,” seldom respected or rewarded by departmental and college structures. Like students, faculty can come to regard such courses as obligations to be performed perfunctorily and expeditiously—as “dues” to be paid so they can get on with their real academic careers. As we noted in Part I, “General Education . . . is *no* instructor’s natural priority.” But we go even further: because, at a research university, almost everyone involved would rather be doing something else, General Education is no one’s natural priority. No wonder General Education courses seldom inspire; no wonder students are unenthused; no wonder General Education suffers from a bad reputation.

Recommendations

Unsurprisingly, the main recommendation here flows directly from the analysis above: we must do what we can to undermine the sense that General Education is required. Taken to the extreme, some of us would eliminate all General Education

requirements and trust our students' judgment to take courses across the curriculum. It works for Brown University, where statistics show that students' course selection patterns resemble those at schools with General Education requirements. Although few other universities appear ready to follow suit, there are a number of things we can do so that students *barely notice* they are fulfilling General Education requirements.

- ▶ General Education should permeate the complete curriculum. Rather than segregated, such courses must be integrated into departmental programs of study, must exist at both introductory and more advanced levels, and must be offered as both large lecture courses that are gateways to disciplines and as seminars on focused topics just for first-year students. The proposed new General Education curriculum at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, for example, emphasizes making connections across the curriculum. It includes both experiential education and skills-integration requirements (in communication, foreign language, and quantitative analysis) that may be fulfilled by enrolling in upper-level courses in the major. At Princeton University, almost all courses in the curriculum count toward a set of distribution area requirements that are organized around "modes of inquiry." That means that courses in the Department of Psychology, for example, might fulfill the Science and Technology requirement, or Quantitative Reasoning, or Epistemology and Cognition, or Social Analysis. Courses ranging from large introductory lectures, to advanced courses for majors, to freshman seminars all fulfill General Education requirements.
- ▶ As much as possible, we should provide students with choices rather than mandate specific courses. Although there are risks to such a "smorgasbord" approach, allowing students choices is preferable to requiring one or several courses for all students. The reality of choice can do much to counteract the resentment and resistance of students to an otherwise mandatory component of the curriculum. Even within programs such as

basic writing courses, we should try to provide students with a set of choices.

- ▶ Courses that fulfill the General Education requirement must be “real” courses, not identified solely as General Education, but serving more than a single purpose—as they do in the curriculum at The University of Wisconsin–Madison. Among other things, such courses should prepare students for work in prospective majors.
- ▶ Even as they accomplish many things at once, these courses must make the aims of the institution’s General Education requirement *an explicit topic of discussion*. Whether the goal is skill-building, or preparation for informed citizenship, or grappling with ethical issues, or exposure to diverse cultures and ethnic traditions, faculty members should “spell it out.” We must help students make connections between the *what* and the *why* of their coursework.
- ▶ These courses must focus on topics and texts that make students think, not just absorb, demanding work that challenges students’ assumptions about what they think they know and believe. They must foster skills of critical thinking, communication, and problem solving in conjunction with engaging content, and they must give students a sense of emerging mastery.
- ▶ These courses must demonstrate the value of “general” education over the highly specialized by attacking issues or problems with multidisciplinary methods and perspectives. They must model the kinds of successful and satisfying synthetic thinking possible only when one appreciates that in-depth knowledge in just one specialized subject may be necessary but is never sufficient. Make General Education courses a “tool kit” for problem solving and the connection to the rest of their education will become patently obvious to students as they use those tools again and again.
- ▶ We can diminish faculty resistance to General Education by

fully integrating General Education courses into the college curriculum, with a range of courses of various sizes at various levels. In that way, we can offer variety and flexibility to both faculty and students. The best lecturers will integrate some of the goals of General Education into their large introductory lecture courses. Others will jump at the chance to explore a favorite topic with a small group of enthusiastic freshmen. Administrators can and should offer appropriate incentives to the best and most respected teachers on campus to get involved in offering or designing innovative courses. Our goal should be to make teaching such courses a joy rather than a burden.

We recognize that many of these ideas are easier to imagine and to implement at some institutions than at others. The administrative and academic structures, as well as financial realities, of many institutions can make this goal of curricular integration more difficult. Yet we believe that any institution can begin to move in these directions: toward integration rather than segregation, toward flexibility rather than rigidity, toward simple rather than complex requirements, toward interdisciplinarity rather than insularity, toward faculty investment rather than indifference.

Such shifts, even subtle, will translate into measurable success in the classroom. And when the reality of General Education courses begins to match our rhetoric, we will no longer need the rhetoric.

CONCLUSION

Our symposium discussions ranged broadly over culture, institutions, and philosophies of education. Our abiding concern has been to look at ways to help students understand General Education, and that has led us to examine the complex institutional policies, priorities, and structures that speak to the public, to students, and to the faculty. And we have observed that the true priorities—research and specialization—speak most clearly and forcefully.

For all the eloquent conversation in the General Education symposium, we found ourselves at the conclusion of our meetings invoking a simple image from the playgrounds where our students get much of their earliest understanding of the world: the seesaw. We believe that in many institutions the weight given to research and specialization rules the balance, while General Education teeters on the high end. Our students follow that lead, leaning toward specialization and away from important comprehensive and liberal learning. We conclude that the research university, with its many responsibilities and complex missions, should look carefully at the balance between its research mission and its broadest cultural educational purposes. Millions of students attend research universities, and how those institutions structure and prioritize and deliver undergraduate education and, more particularly, General Education, matters a great deal. It matters for the students and the quality of their lives; it matters for the health of our democratic culture and how we interact with the rest of the world; and it matters for the human condition in the broadest sense. We reaffirm our faith that General Education indeed does have the power to make us better human beings, who can, in turn, make a better world.

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GEORGE S. BRIDGES, Dean of Undergraduate Education and Vice Provost at the University of Washington, oversees all academic advising and the administration of programs that assist students in meeting their General Education requirements. He will be among those leading a reformulation of the UW General Education requirements over the next few years.

HANK DOBIN, Associate Dean of the College at Princeton University, has primary responsibility for undergraduate curricular matters across the campus, including General Education.

MICHAEL R. JONES, Associate Dean of the College at The University of Chicago, is responsible with the Dean of the College and the College faculty for the College's academic programs. The College Dean's Office is directly responsible for General Education at Chicago.

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THOMAS A. TWEED, Zachary Smith Professor of Religious Studies and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Curricula at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, chairs the Subcommittee on General Education as well as the Administrative Boards of the General College and College of Arts and Sciences, which review all course and policy proposals. He served on the Curriculum Review Steering Committee and will coordinate the implementation of the new General Education curriculum.

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ELLEN R. WOODS, Senior Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education at Stanford University, is responsible for management of a curricular grant program for development of new General Education courses and serves on the Faculty Senate committees with oversight for General Education policy.

APPENDIX

URLS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA AT LOS ANGELES:

<http://www.college.ucla.edu/ge/> and

<http://www.college.ucla.edu/ge/clusters/>

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO:

<http://www2.college.uchicago.edu/catalog/>

THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN: <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/dean/ug/>

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHAPEL HILL:

<http://www.unc.edu/depts/uc/> and

<http://www.unc.edu/curriculumrevision/>

THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY:

<http://www.psu.edu/bulletins/bluebook/gened/>

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY: <http://www.princeton.edu/pr/catalog/ua/>

STANFORD UNIVERSITY:

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/undergrad/ger/>

UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA:

<https://www.virginia.edu/%7Eregist/ugradrec/chapter6/uchap6-1.1.html#competency>

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON:

<http://www.washington.edu/students/ugrad/advising/ged/>

THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON:

<http://www.ls.wisc.edu/gened/>

NOTES

1. The Harvard Committee, *General Education in a Free Society: Report of the Harvard Committee* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1945), 51.
2. *Ibid.*, 6.
3. *Ibid.*, 7-15.
4. National Education Association, 1998:
<http://www.nea.org/publiced/edstats/statsata.html#C4>
5. Christopher J. Lucas, *Crisis in the Academy: Rethinking Higher Education in America* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), chap. 4.
6. *Ibid.*, 151-52; William Cronon, "'Only Connect': The Goals of a Liberal Education," *The Key Reporter* (Winter 1998-99): 2-4.
7. The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities* (New York: The Carnegie Foundation, 1998).
8. Robert B. Barr and John Tagg, "From Teaching to Learning: A New Paradigm for Undergraduate Education," *Change* (November-December 1995): 13-25.
9. See description and listing of Doctoral/Research Universities-extensive at <http://www.carnegiefoundation.org/Classification/>
10. The Harvard Committee noted this tension as well. See 43-47.
11. David Brooks, "The Organization Kid," *Atlantic Monthly*, April 2001.
12. Ernest L. Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate* (New York: The Carnegie Foundation, 1990), 56.
13. See the AAC&U advertisement in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* 48, no. 31 (April 12, 2002): A23; and The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in the Research University, *Reinventing Undergraduate Education: A Blueprint for America's Research Universities* (New York: The Carnegie Foundation, 1998).
14. Office of Institutional Research, *Survey of Attitudes toward General Education*, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, May 2001.

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