

Summary of comments from September 20, 2018, GE Special Faculty Meeting

Handwritten notes summarized by Kelsey Thompson, IR&E:

Many faculty brought up the question of **student agency** and what this would/should look like in the context of the new GE. Below is a summary of the specific reactions to this principle:

- What is the right balance of choice and requirements? How can students be given agency while maintaining a sense of faculty ownership of the curriculum?
 - Could allow students to select from a variety of pathways or have a contract GE model where students petition for particular courses to count towards requirements
 - Too much student agency could turn it into a consumer-driven model
- First-year experience could promote agency and stop box-ticking
- How does advising fit here/what is the faculty role within student agency? Students should be able to make informed decisions about which courses to take and the GE should be understandable to them.
 - How do students make connections/integrate knowledge across the GE requirements and what role should faculty play in helping them do this?
 - How do we solicit student input at this stage?
- Agency can be good in encouraging breadth, getting students outside of their comfort zone, and encouraging exploration (particularly before students choose a major)
 - Breadth should be valued on its own, and not just in relation to depth
- Reducing the total number of requirements could particularly benefit first-generation and international students who may not enter with credit and/or need to take remedial courses
 - Would a reduction sacrifice breadth or inclusion of diverse perspectives? Would students graduate too early? What would take the place of the reduced load (perhaps required internships)?
- Student agency is currently affected by challenges such as cross-listing courses. Could the new GE courses exist independent of any particular department(s)?

Defining “forward-looking” was another common theme. Some ideas/thoughts expressed by faculty:

- Includes thinking about what the world will look like in the future and preparing students for working and living in this future world
 - What do we want our students to look like/be able to do when they graduate?
 - Different ways of knowing and practical skills should have value along with content knowledge that students gain through their major
 - Ethics is also a big part of what we should be teaching our students, and should be more deliberately woven throughout the curriculum
- Need to teach students to be flexible and resilient; curriculum should also be flexible to accommodate changes in the world as well as the student body (e.g., demographics)
- Forward-looking should also incorporate the past, which influences and is relevant to the future

- Solely focusing on contemporary issues is dismissive of certain disciplines in the humanities which are more often backward-looking

Summary of responses to the “**resource-sensitive**” principle:

- What types of support will be provided to faculty in the transition to retrain/assist them in adjusting to the new GE?
 - Need to consider administrative support and support in designing and conducting assessment as well
- Some took issue with the notion of resource-sensitive, suggesting that resource-rich or resource-supported should be the focus instead
 - Need to consider what is best for students
 - Too much focus on breadth in the curriculum could create a tension between student agency and resources

The remaining comments related to the actual **content of the curriculum**:

- How do these principles map on to or guide the creation of the curriculum content (e.g., inclusion of diverse perspectives, remaining practical about what can be reasonably accomplished in four years)?
- The connection to St. Olaf’s mission and/or STOGGoals should be more explicit
- Some principles seem to be missing, such as: creative, integrative, innovative, interdisciplinary, inspiring, challenging, global, collaborative, resilient, critical (thinking and analysis)