

Report of the Task Force on General Education

May 8, 2018

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1. Executive Summary

The task force finds reason for pride in our General Education curriculum. We also find important reasons to re-imagine it, and recommit ourselves to its guiding ideals. We recommend the following:

- a) Rededication to a college-wide, intentional effort to support students' recognition of the meaning and value of their GE.
- b) Explicit efforts to advance equity and inclusion both in the structure of requirements, and in some particular requirements.
- c) A more intentional, integrated first year experience.
- d) A new approach to quantitative reasoning that distributes that learning across many fields of study.
- e) Explore expansion of the range of learning experiences through which GE requirements might be satisfied.
- f) Revise GE in religion to allow for a more pluralistic approach.

The report that follows describes the background and work of the Task Force leading up to these recommendations. We conclude with a few other, broader recommendations.

2. General Introduction: The Importance of GE in the Liberal Arts at St. Olaf

By whatever name it is called, “general education” is at the heart of a liberal arts education. This is especially so for a college with the mission and history of St. Olaf. Many institutions offer superb education in particular fields. St. Olaf certainly does. But we make an additional promise to students. We promise they will graduate not only with expertise in a particular field of major study, but with a breadth of knowledge, skills, and dispositions that equips them particularly well for a complex future. We promise they will cultivate a sense of history, a sense for the arts and literature, an understanding of the methods and findings of the social and natural sciences, an informed moral sensitivity, acquaintance with the scriptures and beliefs of religious communities—and much more besides. We promise that these things will shape their characters as citizens, friends, family members, leaders, and workers. This promise of “general education” defines us.

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Since the early 1990's general education at St. Olaf (GE) has consisted of a set of requirements distributed across the curriculum, each defined by guidelines and intended learning outcomes. The broad pattern of these requirements, as well as their specific definitions, present an admirable and meticulously implemented vision of how we might fulfill the promise of general education.

Nevertheless, twenty-five years is a long run for a curriculum, and many things have changed during those twenty-five years. Consider just a few, especially important changes:

1. The college has pursued the strategic goal of becoming a more diverse community. Faculty and student body alike now increasingly reflect a desirable diversity of race, national origin, religion, sex- and gender-expression.
2. Many of the guilds that sustain faculty work have been revolutionized by new techniques, new findings, and whole new fields of knowledge.
3. Our sense of best practices for pedagogy has evolved with new research about student learning.
4. Our sense of what the liberal arts are called to deliver has been shaped by national discussions about learning in the twenty-first century. Many institutions, for example, have come to stress interdisciplinarity, collaboration, experiential learning, learning communities, and reflection to a greater degree than previously.

In light of these and other changes, St. Olaf has sought to re-imagine how our GE serves the central principles of our mission.

3. Task Force Activities

Responding to a charge from the faculty, the GE task force engaged in myriad activities to understand the state of GE at the college, to learn from the efforts of other institutions, and to identify high-level principles that are worth pursuing in GE at St. Olaf.

We conducted extensive open-ended conversations among ourselves. We studied and reported on GE practices at ACM and other comparable schools. We conducted interviews and conversations with most departments and programs of the college, and with many committees and offices of the college. We conducted surveys both of students and of alums of the college. We hosted a listening session with concerned students during the spring of 2017. We hosted a noted observer of national patterns in GE, Professor Paul Hanstedt, for a lecture and conversations.

We developed three “structural” models of GE and presented these to the faculty in faculty meetings and forums. We attempted to foster wide community conversation about the pros and cons of these models. We abandoned this approach as faculty resisted deliberation on the merits of these structural models in the absence of commitments about the specific distribution and definition of content areas in each. We remain hopeful, however, that these models at least sparked excitement in others for visualizing engaging new ways our students can attain a general education. We encourage our successors to mine these models for good ideas.

With support from the Provost, and from the Center for Innovation in the Liberal Arts, we hosted forums on broad dimensions of GE, such as the contrast of “integrative” and “distributive” approaches, or varieties of First-Year Experience. We also hosted forums on specific content areas embedded in GE at St. Olaf, including Religion, Quantitative Reasoning, and History. We surveyed faculty in search of consensus about guiding principles (such as the ideal of insuring equitable access

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to GE learning opportunities for every student, or increasing the likelihood that every student can name and characterize the significance of the liberal arts in their own experience). We attempted to identify a consensus about Learning Outcomes for GE as a whole.

Calendar of Main Task Force Activities:

- September 21, 2017 Faculty Forum: Introducing Three Models for GE
- September 28, 2017 Paul Hanstedt, Current Trends in Liberal Education Curricular Design
- September 29, 2017 Paul Hanstedt Discussion with the GE Task Force: Exploring the Options and the Implications
- October 19, 2017 Student Forum
- November 16, 2017 Faculty Forum: Integrative and Distribution GE Models (Follow-up on Paul Hanstedt visit)
- November 30, 2017 Faculty Forum: First Year Seminars: Who, What, and How?
- February 15, 2018 Faculty Forum: The Role of Religion in General Education
- March 8, 2018 Faculty Forum: Necessary Quantities: The Proficiency with Numbers Oles Really Need
- April 5, 2018 Student Forum on Religion and GE
- April 26, 2018 Faculty Forum: Our world is changing – should our approach to teaching history change as well?
- Throughout the year Presentations and discussions with Student Senate, Board of Regents Academic Affairs Committee, Alumni Board, Retention Committee, Curriculum Committee

PowerPoint slides and video recordings of many of these forums are available on the GE Task Force website: <https://wp.stolaf.edu/doc/general-education-task-force/>

Further information about the Task Force is collected at:
<https://wp.stolaf.edu/doc/general-education-task-force/>

4. Principal Findings

In this section we summarize some findings arising from many of these activities, and conclude with some commentary on these findings.

From Consideration of Other Institutions and Invited Guests:

Many institutions are pursuing “integrative” rather than “distributive” GE programs. They seek breadth in learning, skills, and dispositions, not by requiring courses distributed across the many

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departments, but through learning communities, course sequences, problem-based courses, or other settings that *integrate* diverse disciplinary approaches. Many institutions emphasize team-based learning, integrative collaborations among faculty and students to address challenging problems. Many institutions invite students to reflect on their learning through portfolio practices, or other means of gathering and making sense of artifacts from courses. Though many of these practices are immensely appealing, we remain convinced that any GE should reflect the distinct character, mission, and history of institution where it is employed. So while we might take inspiration from the successes of other institutions, and that might entail implementation of a more integrative GE, or a reflective portfolio practice, or more reliance on so-called high impact practices, we should work out a path that is true to our own situation.

From Conversations with Departments and Programs:

In conversations with faculty colleagues in departments and programs we found widespread suspicion that students do not form a solid sense of the meaning or value of their GE as a whole. As members of one department put it, St. Olaf GE presently encourages “the worst box-checking tendencies” of students.

We found a range of judgments about the overall value of GE: some departments are enthusiastic champions of GE; but some are warier of the value of GE, and warier still of the perceived burden GE places on students’ other learning goals (e.g., in majors and electives).

Somewhat worrisome, we found among colleagues a pervasive frustration and anxiety arising from the sense that their work in GE is neither well understood nor properly appreciated by colleagues in other parts of the faculty. Many colleagues expressed apprehension that the GE they teach might well be reduced or cut without being understood. And indeed, we found it to be the case that many colleagues actually do *not* show deep understanding of GE requirements housed outside their home department or faculty. (Notably, we also found more than a few instances where faculty showed incomplete understanding of GE requirements that they *do* teach regularly.)

More broadly, we encountered among faculty a tension between ambitious visions of a new curriculum, and deep caution. The caution seems to have many layers: fear about losing out in a new GE; fear about “getting GE wrong” and setting the college on an unfavorable course in a challenging time; fear about missing out on a moment of inspiring innovation; fear that a new GE will simply impose new, uncompensated demands on an already fatigued faculty. In many instances the mood of caution was intensified by worries over the impact of SRAP on each of our own departments and programs.

From Student and Alum Surveys:

Student members of the task force developed and carried out a survey of student opinion regarding GE. 323 responses were tallied. Thematic analysis of the results was provided by ER&A (see Appendix A). Some distinct impressions emerge from the student surveys. Many students perceive our GE to be too big, tilted too much towards the humanities, heavy on writing, unfriendly to certain majors (especially NSM majors), not well integrated into majors, un-reflectively western-centric, inconsistently delivered, and too heavy on religion (especially Christian religion). Many students raise specific pleas for new content in our GE. They call for more attention to a cluster of learning goals about privilege and power related to race, gender, and sexuality. They call for more

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attention to quantitative reasoning. They call for more opportunities for learning with a global focus.

Questions about GE were also included in a regular installment of the HEDS Alum Survey. 351 Alums responded to open-ended questions about perceived strengths and weaknesses of the current GE, and about what is over- or under-represented in the current GE. Alums who responded affirmed the value of broad learning accomplished in GE courses. Yet they also echoed many critiques and suggestions from students. Like many students, many alums called for reduced, or more pluralistic treatment of religion, and increased opportunities to learn about diverse histories and cultures. Many alums indicated the importance of quantitative reasoning in their post-graduate lives, and wished that GE had emphasized it more (see Appendix A).

From Discussion With Concerned Students:

Following an invitation extended by a student member of the Task Force, we hosted an impromptu gathering of concerned students in the Spring of 2017. Those students presented a number of critiques of the current GE. In particular they asserted that the current GE does not adequately prepare students with appropriate knowledge, or theoretical perspectives on patterns of power, privilege, and identity involving race, gender, and sexuality. They identified many opportunities in the current curriculum that *do* afford such knowledge and perspectives. But they lamented that, because this content is not required, students can easily circumvent it. They also faulted the current emphasis on “the west” that defines HWC. In their judgment, focus on the west turns many students into the “other” and perpetuates unhelpful stereotypes.

From Faculty Forums on Content Areas

The Task Force hosted forums on three significant content areas in GE: religion, quantitative reasoning, and history. Approximately fifty faculty attended each of these forums.

The forum on religion revealed gaps between perception and practice in current religion GE courses: these courses are perceived by many students to focus on Christian content to the exclusion of other religions or perspectives; yet the stated practice of the department is to contextualize Christian content in relation to other material. In any case, there is a significant difference of faculty opinion about the place of religion in GE. Many argue that in an “inclusive, globally engaged community” (Mission Statement) the study of religion should have less weight and be more explicitly global and multi-religious in character. This appears to be a majority view. But on the other hand, some argue that to “examine faith and values” (Mission Statement) the study of Christian content, and more importantly, the study of Christian theology is required by the mission and history of the college.

The forum on quantitative reasoning revealed near consensus that students should encounter quantitative reasoning in courses distributed across the curriculum, and in a diversity of ways appropriate to the many disciplines where it is employed. Such cross-disciplinary encounters with quantitative reasoning were seen to be more valuable to GE than a single course in MSCS.

The forum on history focused on the link in the current GE between particular methods of historical inquiry, and particular content concerning “the west.” Most participants in the forum advocated severing this link to prioritize study of the past apart from a particular mandate to study

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the west. There was subsequent disagreement about the value of a separate requirement to study the traditions of the west. Some affirmed that value because the west represents a substantial tradition of enduring influence in the lives and futures of students. However, a majority of forum participants expressed skepticism about the possibility or value of delineating and requiring some content as “western.” They cited the risk of elevating a construct that had been used to marginalize others (including many of our students).

General Comment On These Findings

Each of these ‘inputs’ (surveys, forums, etc.) was helpful to the task force as we sought to understand both the status quo and the re-visions that will serve the college well. None of these inputs was decisive by itself. We heard and read many critical and many appreciative statements about GE, and many recommendations for the future. We tried to give each of these observations the right weight alongside many other considerations raised in our own deliberations.

Many students and many alums call for specific revisions, additions, or deletions to current GE. In some instances, those calls seem to arise from basic misperceptions of the requirements as actually implemented, or in misunderstandings of the purpose of general education, or in specific frustrations unique to individual students’ ambitions. But in many instances, student and alum calls for change are compelling. In particular, significant numbers of students and alums ask for explicit focus on race and gender, for more pluralistic treatment of religion, and for moving beyond the binary of western and non-western to provide for broader learning about global cultures.

A process of curriculum revision should not be strictly determined by student/alum views. Nevertheless, consistently held student/alum views should carry significant weight. Alongside those perceptions, faculty should reckon with the knowledge produced in their many disciplines, and with the “sense of the whole” generated over long experience as teachers and scholars. Faculty should accept responsibility to make and explain decisions about the curriculum.

5. Summary of Reasons to Re-Imagine GE

- A. Too many students do not see the value or meaning of their learning in GE. Too many regard it mainly as an obstacle to other activities they regard as more meaningful, such as study abroad, major courses, or career-related courses. Straightforward strategies could communicate a confident sense of the meaning and value of the whole: a structure of requirements whose logic and labeling are more accessible to students; effective academic advising that advocates for the value of GE; teaching practices in GE courses that expressly and repeatedly advocate for the meaning and value of the whole. At present we are not doing enough to meet this challenge.
- B. The current curriculum is not as equitable or inclusive as our mission requires. This shortcoming is manifest in many dimensions. For example,
 1. By presenting new ideas, GE should probably make students uncomfortable at many moments; that discomfort is probably a good thing. But there is the peculiar discomfort of having one's experience and background systematically minimized, or used as a foil for understanding the experiences of dominant groups. This second discomfort is not a good thing -- especially at a college that aspires to be "an inclusive and globally engaged community." Too often the structure of our requirements and the content of our courses

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- tacitly communicate that some students are outsiders, while others are central to the curriculum.
2. Further, our current GE does not adequately equip students to understand the histories, patterns, and practices by which intersectional identities such as race and gender affect our experience of the world.
- C. GE is not well enough integrated into the structures and expectations of many majors.
- D. Faculty are not universally committed to the aims of our GE.
- E. The current GE does not often enough confront students with open-ended challenges calling on diverse prior learning.
- F. The current GE does not appropriately acknowledge the value of carefully conceived experiential learning.
- G. The current GE does not provide adequate prompting for students to reflect on and give voice to the meaning and value of their particular learning in GE.

6. Main Recommendations for Reform

- A. Given that many students do not appreciate the meaning and value of GE as much as we would wish, *we should implement a curriculum that is more easily comprehensible*. GE should be organized, taught, and presented to students in ways that students can immediately understand.
1. We should offer a curricular whose structure is more obviously meaningful to students.
 2. We should support that curriculum with teaching and advising that explicitly intends to help students internalize its meaning and value.
 3. We should provide more effective labels and descriptions. For example, since “general education” itself seems not to communicate effectively the value and meaning of the curriculum, the very name of the whole program should be reconsidered. Further, the current acronyms, while effective as signposts for the overall structure as faculty perceive it, are more or less opaque to too many students. The labels of particular requirements should be revised to communicate more directly the significance and appeal of each area.
- B. Given that we intentionally seek a student body with diverse backgrounds and experiences, and that we aspire to be an “inclusive” community, *GE should be designed and delivered in ways that advance principles of equity and inclusion*.
1. To the extent possible, the design of the curriculum should not signal that the experiences and backgrounds of some students, more than others, are central. Conversely, it should not signal that some students, more than others, are outsiders to the central content.
 2. GE should include explicit attention to the histories, patterns, and practices by which social identities are formed and maintained. There should be explicit learning about formations of power, privilege, and intersectional categories such as race, gender, sexuality.
 3. GE should be designed to facilitate learning for students of diverse backgrounds and personal histories.

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- C. *GE should include a more intentionally integrated, richer first year experience.* An integrated FYE should preserve the current intensive introduction to college writing. In addition, for a student body with diverse backgrounds and experiences, we should craft a first year experience that prepares all students equally to thrive at this liberal arts college. The FYE should take up aims such as
1. Equipping all students with broad “college knowledge,” or familiarity with the practices that lead to success in the particular institution of this liberal arts college.
 2. Cultivating students’ practice of reflection and planning for the rest of GE in relation to major and other goals.
 3. Cultivating students’ understanding and knowledge of the liberal arts as a particular educational ideal.
 4. Helping students to engage in effective, critical discourse including the possibility of respectful disagreement on a range of moral and political issues.
- D. Given the significance of quantitative reasoning in almost every sphere of life, we should offer a GE that encourages students’ proficiency in making and evaluating arguments related to evidence that can be quantified. Such a *QR requirement should be distributed across the curriculum* to reflect the ways different disciplines make distinctive arguments with numbers.
- E. Given substantial evidence for the high impact of experiential learning, *the college should investigate the possibility that GE requirements could be arranged in a way that allows for the fulfillment of requirements in experiential settings* like internships, academic civic engagement, directed research or other independent study, etc.
- F. Given the college’s mission to be ‘an inclusive and globally engaged community’; given the college’s strategic commitment to enroll a more diverse student body and hire a more diverse faculty; and given the frequent testimony of many students and alums, *the college should revise GE in religion to allow for a more pluralistic approach.*

7. Other Recommendations for Policies and Practices:

Beyond the recommendations just listed in Section 5, we offer some other broad recommendations.

Building and Maintaining a Vital Faculty Culture of GE

Nothing in the mere design of a GE curriculum insures that it will remain vital over time. To sustain a lively culture of GE, there must be an intentional institutional commitment to its “care and feeding.” Among students and faculty alike we find notable disengagement from the goals of GE. One colleague has said we are “alienated” from GE.

Despite wide agreement that in a sound GE students will be able to recognize and describe the value of their learning, students at present generally cannot. Too many regard most requirements as boxes to check. Too many misunderstand specific requirements. Too many raise complaints about requirements based on mischaracterizations of the content of those requirements.

The situation is not entirely better with faculty. We encountered many instances where faculty showed incomplete knowledge of guidelines and outcomes for GE requirements (even, in some cases, GE requirements they were currently teaching). We encountered instances of faculty

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estrangement from GE—in effect, sharing a student perception that GE represents an unwelcome obstacle to more rewarding pursuits (e.g., in the major).

Evidence of this “malnourishing” of GE is widespread:

1. Departments do not consistently commit ongoing effort to cultivating a culture of excellence in GE courses.
2. GE is not sufficiently prominent in new faculty orientation, so junior faculty do not consistently internalize the embedded values or practices (or even, sometimes, the content) of the curriculum.
3. Faculty do not consistently derive value from GE. Too often we teach our GE courses without specific appeal to the invitations implicit in the guidelines and ILOs.
4. GE is delivered erratically: GE courses are not consistently faithful to guidelines; and GE attributes are sometimes arbitrarily withheld from courses that actually comply with guidelines. (Not surprisingly, students notice and resent such inconsistencies.)
5. The importance of majors is emphasized in campus culture at the expense of deep investment in the value and meaning of GE.
6. Most significantly: *Students don't understand it; they check the boxes; they sometimes resent it.*

It is apparent that we have not maintained our current GE with sufficient energy. No one in particular is to blame. There is a responsibility to nurture GE vested in every individual faculty member and every office of faculty leadership. Collectively, we have not done enough.

Whatever revisions to GE are undertaken, the college must recommit to developing and maintaining a vital institutional culture for GE. The needed vitality might be supported by specific practices, some of which focus on faculty life, some of which focus on student life.

Ideally, students will be able to name and “own” the meaning and value of their learning in GE. Through advisement, through the content and pedagogy of individual courses, and implicitly through the culture of the entire campus, this can become a reality.

Faculty practices to nourish GE:

1. GE must be explained to students over and over again, e.g., in orientation activities; in the catalog; in each and every course (regardless whether it is a GE course); in every moment of advising; throughout the organization of majors.
2. GE must be nurtured explicitly through pedagogy, e.g., through direct explanations in classrooms, syllabi, and advising.
3. GE must be nurtured by faculty and faculty leadership, e.g., through new faculty orientation; through workshops and demonstrations of pedagogy and course design; through presentations on content from diverse areas of GE; through new course development or adaptation tied to GE.
4. GE must be nurtured throughout the faculty “life-cycle,” e.g., in the structure of rewards and recognition; in criteria of review and mentoring directed toward tenure and advancement; and in initial position descriptions and hiring decisions.

Student-focused practices to nourish GE:

1. GE must be effectively explained to students through residence life advising (by RAs and JCs), through Week One activities, and through Admissions activities.

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2. The language by which each GE requirement is presented must be more accessible to students than the current scheme of cryptic acronyms.
3. The language by which GE as a whole is presented must be revised to communicate more effectively the meaning and value of GE. Website descriptions, admissions materials need a new “brand” that successfully addresses our intended audiences.
4. It may be wise to change the name by which the curriculum is known to something that communicates more immediately to our intended audiences.

Administrative Considerations:

1. A thriving GE requires significant ongoing investment of faculty time and creativity. GE teaching should be duly recognized in broad considerations of faculty workload.

Valuing GE as a Vehicle of Faculty Development

It is a mistake to consider GE solely from the side of student outcomes. GE also has significant impacts on the vitality and sustainability of faculty life. A bad, or a badly maintained GE will be experienced as a burden for faculty. It will require rote teaching. It will cast general education as an unfortunate obstacle to be overcome. It will increase the perception that major studies are the truly valuable experience. It will focus faculty efforts on teaching in the major as context for rewards and recognition. It will fragment the community of learning.

By contrast, a sound and lively GE will be an occasion for faculty development. It will foster new collaborations among faculty across all departments and sectors of the curriculum. It will create circumstances for faculty to develop new content knowledge and new pedagogies. It will keep faculty engaged as citizens of the college, as teachers, and as models of generally educated persons. It will lend vitality to teaching in every phase of a professor’s career.

8. Appendixes

Appendix A

2016-2018 GE Student and Alumni Surveys: Summary of Key Open-Ended Responses

2018 HEDS Alumni Survey – Supplemental Questions

“Think about the General Education requirements you completed while at St. Olaf (such as effective writing (WRI), effective speaking (ORC), quantitative reasoning (AQR), ethical reasoning (EIN), multicultural knowledge (MCD/MCG), etc. What were the strengths and/or weaknesses of that curriculum, as you consider how it has impacted your personal and/or professional life after graduation?” (208 responses)

1. The specific GE attributes most commonly mentioned in these responses were WRI (44¹), MCD/MCG (31), ORC (21), and EIN (15)². Most alumni felt that the writing and EIN requirements were strengths of the GE curriculum (though some had more negative experiences or felt that the courses designated to fulfill the writing requirement were

¹ Parenthetical numbers refer to the total number of comments reflecting that particular type of response

² Note that these were also the examples given in the question text itself, and may have influenced the focus of the responses

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somewhat arbitrary). Alumni reported more mixed experiences with ORC courses, and many mentioned the MCD/MCG attribute in the context of desiring more and/or better options for fulfilling this requirement.

- a. Several alumni (11) specifically noted the American Conversations and Great Conversation programs as highly impactful in giving them a broad knowledge/skill base, as well as in developing their perspective on the world around them.
2. Other alumni (68) spoke more generally about the usefulness of the GE curriculum in providing them with a well-rounded education and skills they still draw on today. Many of these alumni also stated that the GE requirements “forced” them to take courses in disciplines they might not have considered otherwise, and that they appreciated this aspect of the GE curriculum.
3. Still, several comments (20) suggested that the GE requirements could be better integrated with each other, perhaps through more interdisciplinary options. This could also help reduce the total number of courses students must take to fulfill the GE requirements; some alumni noted that this prevented them from pursuing areas they were truly interested in.
 - a. Furthermore, many suggested that most of the associated skills/foci (e.g., writing, oral communication, understanding diverse perspectives, quantitative reasoning) should continue to be developed in all courses students take, not just those with the specific GE attribute attached.
 - b. Several of these alumni also indicated a need for better integration with real-world applications.

“What, if anything, do you feel may have been over- or under-represented in the General Education curriculum, that you would recommend changing?” (149 responses)

1. The most common suggestions for change focused on decreasing the religion requirements and/or offering more courses focused on other religions aside from Christianity (35) and the need for less of a Western focus and greater representation of diverse perspectives across the GE curriculum in general (33).
 - a. Some alumni (11) indicated that substituting more EIN requirements for religion requirements would be preferable.
2. Other areas that alumni felt were underrepresented were AQR (particularly computer science/statistics; 14), ORC (12), and an emphasis on practical life skills such as personal finance, negotiating skills, workplace communication, and navigating health insurance (11).

2016-17 Student GE Opinion Survey

“What do you feel are the strengths of our current GE system?” (292 responses)

1. Similar to alumni, current students also feel that the broad range of requirements encourages them to take courses outside of their major that they might not have considered otherwise. This variety and the well-rounded education it provides was the main strength highlighted by students (258), and many noted that this is the “essence” of a liberal arts education.

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“What do you feel are the weaknesses of our current GE system?” (283 responses)

1. The most common theme here was the number of requirements (185 comments). Many issues were raised related to this general criticism, the most common being:
 - a. It can be more difficult for certain majors (particularly those in the sciences/STEM fields) to fulfill GE requirements, creating an “unbalanced” feel to the entire GE system.
 - b. Students feel they are not able to take courses they may really be interested in and/or deem necessary for their future career plans. It can also be difficult for students to double-major or study abroad.
 - c. The high number of requirements can also result in many students taking a course they are not interested in just to satisfy a GE requirement, which can diminish the quality of the learning experience for all students in the course.
 - d. There are not enough options to fulfill the requirements (particularly writing). Many students (40) also reported that the assignment of GE attributes can feel somewhat arbitrary, with some courses seeming as though they should count towards a particular GE when they don’t, and others perceived as falling short of the learning content standards for the GE attribute they have been assigned.
 - e. Related to #4, it can be difficult to find GE offerings in introductory-level courses (unless students prioritize taking these courses in first or sophomore year, which is not always possible). This makes fulfilling some requirements particularly difficult if students do not feel they have a sufficient grasp on the content to take an upper-level course, or have to take an additional course to satisfy prerequisites for the GE course. Additionally, some of the requirements do not take into account the diversity of student learning or physical abilities (FOL and SPM were most frequently mentioned in this context).
2. Again matching the alumni responses, several students (57) discussed the lack of focus on diverse perspectives. Many specifically cited insufficient MCD/MCG requirements and/or the heavily Christianity-focused religion course offerings.
 - a. The latter sentiment was echoed in a student forum this spring on the BTS-B/T GE requirements. While only a few students suggested getting rid of the religion requirements entirely, nearly all of the 50 comments collected suggested adding more options for studying other religions in the same in-depth and critical manner (which most view as something the current offerings do well for Christianity). Students are generally understanding of the focus on Christianity due to the college’s heritage, but think that the college’s mission of creating a “globally engaged community” could be better served by including more opportunities for studying other faith traditions.
 - b. Further, students who commented on the EIN attribute generally dislike the implication that philosophy and ethics must be based in a Christian tradition.

“What do you feel is most underrepresented in our current GE system?” (271 responses)

1. Many of the points discussed here were similar to those brought up by alumni. Students’ responses focused on the need for greater representation of all types of diversity (racial/ethnic, religious, gender, etc.) both within course offerings and across GE requirements (84).

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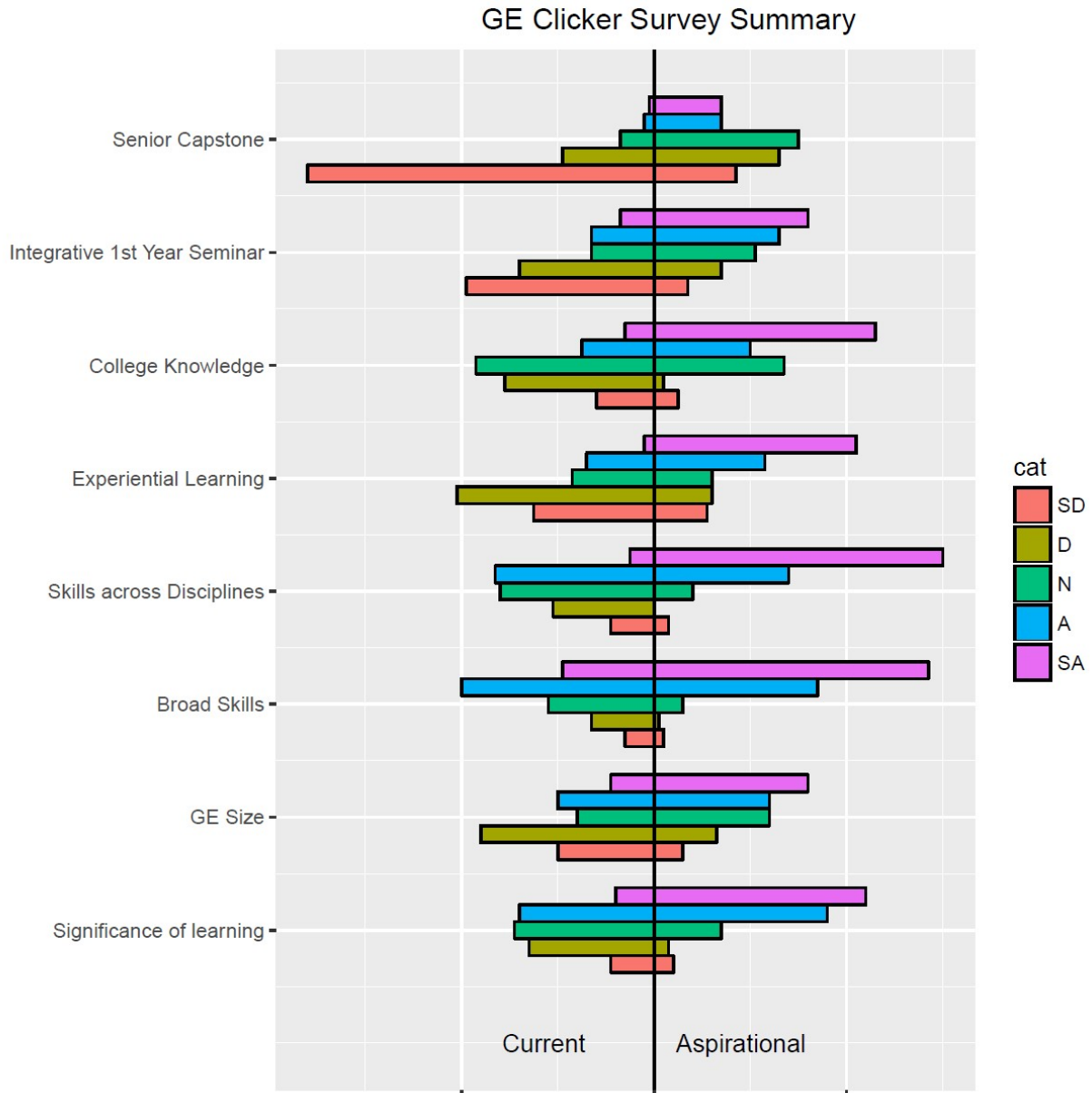
- a. Additionally, many students (88) also feel that AQR (specifically computer science/statistics) and natural sciences/STEM (42) are underrepresented in the current system.
 - b. A few students (12) also touched on the need for more practical skill development, particularly with regards to personal finance.
2. Other areas students feel are underrepresented that were not as common among alumni are fine arts (31) and environmental/sustainability-focused requirements or courses (17).

“What do you feel is the most overrepresented in the current GE system?” (263 responses)

1. Reflecting the responses above, many students expressed that the religion requirements as they stand (i.e., focused on Christianity; 68) and focus on Western culture (44) are overrepresented in the current GE.
2. The other top responses were writing (87), FOL (36), humanities in general (25), and the social sciences (21).

Appendix B
Faculty Clicker Survey, April 12, 2018

Faculty were asked about eight actual, or possible characteristics of our GE. First, they were asked whether these were accurate characterizations of the *current* GE. Then they were asked whether these were characteristics to which we should *aspire*. Results indicate that for a few characteristics (e.g., that students will grasp the “significance of their learning” in GE) there is a strong view that the characteristic is not strongly present in the current GE, but that it is something to aspire to.



9. Membership

Elected and Appointed Members

Heather Klopchin (FA)

Tim Mahr (FA)

Jason Marsh (Hum)

Ariel Strichartz (Hum)

David Booth (IGS)

Jennifer Kwon Dobbs (IGS)

Donna McMillan (NSM)

Matt Richey (NSM)

Doug Casson (SS)

Susie Smalling (SS)

Dana Gross (ex officio Provost's office)

Tia Schaffer, '20

Sarah Freyermuth, '19

Joey Dagher, '20

Regular participant

Steve McKelvey (Registrar)

Research support

Susan Canon (Institutional Research and Effectiveness)

Kelsey Thompson (Educational Research and Assessment)