

GENERAL EDUCATION SWOT

Strengths

-Students

- More courses are now offered online, with some Associate Degrees online, and a variety of modes of delivery
- High pass rates in Gen Ed courses, aiding retention, and little difference in pass rates by gender
- More students are meeting expectations of Gen Ed competencies as “closing the loop” improves student outcomes over time
- Coursework outside major department provides balance and awareness of issues outside discipline
- Wide variety of courses to choose from in Objectives 3-9
- Gen Ed courses provide valuable prerequisite skills and knowledge to prepare students for major programs (e.g. health professions)
- Gen Ed courses that use OER increase affordability
- ECP general education courses increase accessibility and affordability
- Transfer of courses has been made easier over time

-Faculty

- Office of Assessment supports GERC and General Education; ITRC (Quality+ program and course design) and PIE provide resources as well
- Nearly all Gen Ed courses have assessment plans
- GERC Annual Reports provides feedback to instructors and inspires conversations about general education among faculty; focus on overall success of General Education program
- General Education objectives and competencies are reviewed on a regular basis and the first full cycle is nearly completed

Weaknesses

-Students

- General Education are not offered in person on Idaho Falls campus, and there are limited options based on location
- Limited access for students in some specific areas (e.g. lab courses)
- Expertise of teaching online for labs needs improvement
- Declining enrollment in nearly all face-to-face courses
- Challenges with ECP courses include grade inflation, ensuring rigor, communication problems

-Faculty

- Teaching expertise doesn't always factor what is best pedagogically in terms of if/how to offer courses online
- Need more incentives for Quality Matters
- Need better communication with students as to why General Education is important, and with faculty as well
- Uncertainty about future of LMS program and planning for courses
- Operating in silos within the Gen Ed program
- GERC member turnover has led to inconsistent feedback to faculty regarding assessment plans and annual reports
- Gen Ed faculty need greater understanding of learning outcomes and assessment
- Lack of support/recognition for serving on GERC and failure to recognize it as service

Opportunities

-Students

- Online offerings serve students in other parts of Idaho and the US, in addition to local students
- Revisit scheduling of General Education courses to better meet students' needs
- Consider certificate of completion for General Education program to better serve transfer students
- Improve communication with ECP instructors to increase support for them, gather better assessment data, improve rigor, and increase enrollment
- Increase access to regular sections of college courses for high school students

- Strengthen connection between the General Education program and University mission, vision, and values, and reinforce the Bengal identity/community across campus, not just within majors, as General Education is the one part of the curriculum that all undergraduates share
- Increase MOUs for 2+2 program to enable smooth transition for students
- Change perception that General Education is not really necessary; it is the foundation for all later coursework, particularly in demand skills such as communication
- Marketing to set our Gen Ed courses apart from less expensive ones at other institutions

-Faculty

- GERC can improve processes and procedures to make assessment more manageable and improve faculty understanding of learning outcomes and assessment
- Recognize faculty for excellence in teaching General Education courses and their service in assessment; service on GERC may be path to leadership for some
- Increase alternative/authentic assessments, particularly in response to AI
- Increase collaboration across departments
- Use LMS data to streamline assessment

-Other-

- Use GERC assessment data as evidence of skill mastery for other stakeholders

Threats

-Students

- Increasing tuition rates
- General lack of respect for higher education by the public
- Artificial Intelligence (e.g. ChatGPT)
- Need better quality control of ECP

-Faculty

- Switch to Canvas may result in reduced capabilities in gathering data for assessment
- Declining enrollments

- Students taking Gen Ed courses at other institutions (outsourcing), especially in light of cost differentials of four-year schools vs community colleges
- Perception that Gen Ed courses are not really necessary

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