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

Developed by GERC on February 14, 2023 and reviewed by GERC on February 28, 2023