

**LPWG Summary
February 3, 2008**

General Principles

The following are ideas about which we have developed a loose consensus for the future general education program at Simpson College:

1. The general education program of the college should focus objectively on what we want for our students and not on our own personal passions/areas.
2. The general education program of the college should be deliberate and intentional. Students should understand why they are being required to take general education courses.
3. The general education program should help students understand the connections between disciplines.
4. Intellectual and practical skills (inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving) should be embedded within the curriculum of the college. Students should not be required to pass courses specifically created to teach these skills outside of a discipline (i.e. we decided against requiring *Critical Thinking 101*.)
5. Intellectual and practical skills should be demonstrated by students with ever greater sophistication throughout their college experience.
6. Personal and social responsibilities (civic knowledge and engagement, local and global intercultural competence, ethical reasoning, being your best self, etc.) should be embedded within the curriculum of the college. Students should not be required to pass courses specifically created to teach these skills outside of a discipline.
7. The general education program of the college should help students discover their own identity and voice.
8. The general education program should include a course designed in part to help students acclimate to the college environment. Currently our LAS course attempts to fulfill this function.
9. The general education program should help students reflect on the interdisciplinary and integrated nature of learning. This should be accomplished in general education and the majors. This might be augmented by a stand alone course such as our Senior Colloquium course, or a capstone course within the major.

10. Assessment of the general education program at Simpson College should be built-into the program itself and not layered on.

11. Others?

Definitions

The following are simple definitions we have used in discussing general education:

General Education

General education is a term to loosely describe the courses and experiences that are required of all students at higher education institutions. It is sometimes referred to as liberal education.

Core Curriculum

Core curriculum is a term to loosely describe a type of general education where all students take the same set of courses. These courses are typically designed specifically for the purpose of general education. The courses are typically spread-out over the first two years of a student's time at the college.

Competency Requirement

A competency requirement is a term used to describe a requirement that must be met by all students before graduation. Competency may be met at the time of enrolling in the institution by test scores, previous work, or a minimum score on a test administered at matriculation. Students who do not demonstrate competency at the time of matriculation must prove competency before graduation. This may be done by testing out, or a minimum grade in a specific course(s).

Others?

Models for General Education

The following are loose descriptions of various types of general education programs:

Exposure Model

The primary intention of the exposure model is to expose students to a wide variety of subject disciplines that are reflected in the academy. Typically, students are free to select among departments, divisions, or other units of the college. The courses that meet the requirement are typically not designed specifically for general education, and are often the beginning level course in a discipline, or a general survey course in a discipline. It is the simplest of the general education models. The faculty decides how many courses in each discipline or division will be required. Students make their selection based on interest and schedule. Almost by definition, there is no attempt to provide coherence among the courses required.

Ways of Knowing Model

The ways of knowing model is based on the premise that different disciplines see the world in different ways. A social scientist views the world in a certain way. An artist sees the world in another way. The ways of knowing model requires students to see the world through the eyes of different disciplines. This model is similar to the exposure model in that it introduces students to a variety of disciplines, but it is often more intentional. Rather than a student being allowed to take any course in the arts to fulfill the arts requirement, for example, the student needs to take a course that meets a specific criteria. A limited number of courses in the curriculum meet the requirement. Often the courses are not the beginning level course in the discipline, but courses that introduce the students to the discipline, its history, methods, nomenclature, etc. The courses have names like, “The Scientific Perspective” and “The Arts in Our World.”

Big Questions/Enduring Questions Model

The big questions model focuses the general education experience on one or more “big questions.” An example of a big question would be, “What makes us human?” Students are asked to explore the designated big question from a variety of perspectives. How does science answer this question? How does social science or philosophy answer this question, etc. Generally, the students take courses in a variety of disciplines that have been created to help provide perspective on the question.

Great Books Model

The great books model is not necessarily a model of its own, but can be seen rather as a pedagogy used to accomplish the goals of general education. It uses a selection of great books to explore a big question, and so it is often used in conjunction with the big questions model.

Integrated or Concentration Model

The integrated model for general education uses a unifying theme to organize the courses required of students. It is typically a theme that spans several disciplines. It might be something like, “The City in History” or “Law and Society.” Courses that fulfill the concentration are noted in the college catalog. Students can often take the courses in any order, although there might be an introductory course to provide an overview for the topic. Courses that fulfill the concentration are generally offered by a variety of departments. An alternate allows students to choose the courses they take to address the theme and are asked to synthesize what they have learned before they graduate.

Others?