Examples and Ideas about the Process of Revising GE

Baker University (Kansas) spent one year designing the GE reform process. They had a strong emphasis on inclusion, transparency, and communication. Each committee member was responsible for communicating to and getting feedback from a group of seven other faculty with whom he or she had good rapport. All faculty read the AACU’s *Greater Expectations* before having a catered dinner with focused discussion questions. They brought interdisciplinary groups together, fed them, and then asked them to brainstorm about interdisciplinary courses they would like to teach or take. They also had topical dinner meetings (scientific literacy) where those with subject expertise could brainstorm about how to promote student learning in that topic. Their administration was very supportive, but let faculty take the lead. Baker got a $600,000 grant from the Hall Family Foundation to fund their GE revision. (Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) National Conference: “Wholeness in General and Liberal Education” September 25-27, 2008, Ashville, North Carolina)

Eastern Michigan University won a national award for their award-winning processes for General Education revision and reform. Inclusion, transparency, and listening are keys to significant reform. Change needs to be student-focused, faculty-driven and context and institutional specific. Additional resources from grants or outside sources are extremely helpful. Faculty release time and faculty development funds are crucial. (Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) National Conference, “Integrating General Education, Building Curricula, Assessing Programs, and Modeling Best Practices,” October 18-20, 2007, Portland, Maine)

Middle Tennessee State built consensus by lots of open communication (“face time and shoe leather”) and relied on consistent administrative support for resources and the “bully pulpit.” (Association of American Colleges and Universities Conference, “General Education and Assessment: Engaging Critical Questions, Fostering Critical Learning,” March 1-3, 2007, Miami, FL)

Murray State (Tennessee) had dual chairs from Engineering and English in their GE review process. The most important element in their success was visible and vocal support from the provost. They had an organic, flexible process in which they were prepared to go where the process took them. They surveyed faculty on various options showed that some people were outliers. They were not able to get interdisciplinary and integrated courses because of their campus reward structure and FTE generation model. Their new GE cut the connections with disciplinary ownership and focused on alignment with the characteristics of a Murray State graduate. (Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) National Conference: “Wholeness in General and Liberal Education” September 25-27, 2008, Ashville, North Carolina)

San Jose State University promoted campus dialogue with a series of brown bags for both faculty and students on the topic, “What does it mean to be an educated person?” (Association of American Colleges and Universities Conference, “General Education and Assessment: Generating Commitment, Value, and Evidence,” March 4-6, Long Beach, CA)

San Jose State University surveyed all faculty who taught GE courses, deans, & chairs, asking them what was going well with existing GE as a first step in their GE revision. (Association of American Colleges and Universities Conference, “Integrative Designs for General Education and Assessment,” February 21-23, 2008, Boston, MA)
Southwest Missouri State University’s reform process worked well because they had both strong support from their central administration and the faculty retained control of the process. They began by “identifying a clear and comprehensive set of goals for learning in general education which are tied to the University mission.” (The Higher Learning Commission, 2003 Annual Meeting, April 15, 2003, Chicago, IL)

UND’s GE Task Force agreed that any proposal had to get a 2/3 majority from the GE Task Force to go forward to their Faculty Senate. They also invited people from across campus to make proposals. (Association of American Colleges and Universities Conference, “Integrative Designs for General Education and Assessment,” February 21-23, 2008, Boston, MA)

University of Nebraska-Omaha used their GDC system for a series of script-guided conversations with a variety of faculty and also students about GE as a way to begin their process. (Association of American Colleges and Universities Conference, “General Education, Assessment, and the Learning Students Need,” February 26-28, 2009, Baltimore, Maryland)

University of Nebraska-Lincoln used NSSE data, especially some of the aggregated scales early in their process of revising GE as a means to locate areas of concern about GE. They emphasized how that it was an evolving process. They transformed their highly decentralized, college-based approach to GE into a common campus program focused on student learning outcomes. (Association of American Colleges and Universities Conference, “General Education, Assessment, and the Learning Students Need,” February 26-28, 2009, Baltimore, Maryland)

University of Pennsylvania, Shippensburg began GE reform by developing an assessment plan. They got representatives from every department involved in an outcome to develop rubrics with levels of competence. GE is owned by the entire campus, not by individual faculty or by departments. It’s a privilege to teach these courses and responsibilities come with that. They did their best to incorporate all of the stakeholders (trustees, employers, students) in the process. (Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) National Conference: “Wholeness in General and Liberal Education” September 25-27, 2008, Ashville, North Carolina)

University of Southern Maine used a model for effecting adaptive change from Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky (Harvard Business School) to think about their GE revision process. They also advised schools to be sure to involve community college partners in GE planning so they have input into and a stake in the new program. They spent about $650,000 for faculty release time and faculty development. (Association of American Colleges and Universities Conference, “General Education, Assessment, and the Learning Students Need,” February 26-28, 2009, Baltimore, Maryland)

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