

From: Donald Schwert
Sent: Thursday, December 04, 2014 9:54 AM
To: Larry Peterson; Amy Rupiper Taggart
Subject: Quest: regrets about removal of science lab requirement

Hello Amy and Larry,

Over my (37) years at NDSU, I've seen the progressive displacement of "science" in the Gen Ed requirements. It has saddened me, especially given the land grant mission of NDSU (with its focus in "science") and the richness of the sciences on our campus.

There's a lot to be excited about in the Quest proposal, but "science" continues its trek of diminishment in Gen Ed. Particularly of concern is the proposed removal of the laboratory science credit: I would argue that it is in the science laboratory experiences that students get among their best opportunities to practice critical thinking.

Speaking for the introductory courses in Geology, we've invested considerably in transforming both lecture and lab into addressing multiple outcomes of Gen Ed. But it takes both lecture and practice (i.e. laboratory) together to make this work.

Could Geosciences instead create a special Gen Ed course in intro Geology that incorporates this within 3 SH?: probably. But why do this, when we are already accomplishing it for 3 + 1 SH? And why address such a revision (creating a new, "parallel" intro course) when the likelihood is nil of new resources being directed to make us succeed with this?

For Geosciences, the lecture/lab combination of our intro courses is our biggest recruiting tool. Few students arrive at NDSU to major in Geology: instead they are converted to the major by having a great lecture + laboratory experience while meeting their Gen Ed science + lab requirements. In short, this Gen Ed combination has been our department's bread n' butter for recruiting its great majors.

Finally, at the east edge of campus a large modern building is under construction. It's an investment being made to provide great general science laboratory experiences to NDSU's Gen Ed student community. Let's please embrace this opportunity for our students in Quest by maintaining the laboratory science credit requirement.

Thanks for the work that you do and for allowing input,
Don

Donald P. Schwert, PhD
Professor & Chair
Dept. of Geosciences
North Dakota State University
Geosciences Bldg 201
Dept. 2745, P.O. Box 6050
Fargo, ND USA 58108-6050

Tel.: 701.231.7496
Fax: 701.231.7919
Web: www.ndsu.edu/geosci