

## General Education Assessment and Report 2014-15

Jan Lewis, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs

### Initiatives

In May 2014, the Council developed an Assessment initiative to review the success of the General Education program approved in Spring 2008, implemented in Fall 2009, now in place for five full years. See Appendix A for the full proposal.

### Data

During the 2014-15 academic year, the following data was collected:

1. Discussions with each school and division faculty regarding their perception of how General Education was working—from both the faculty and student perspective. (See Appendix B).
2. Student and Faculty Surveys. (See Appendix C for a final report “Liberal Arts Experience Report” that includes these results.)

### Other Activities

1. Visit to Portland to Reed College and Portland State University to consider different General Education models.
2. General Education Workshop facilitated by Wabash consultants, March 2015 (See Appendix C and D for report of outcomes).
3. Developmental Continuum Workshop, May 2015 (See Appendix E for report of outcomes).

### Results

Survey and discussion findings demonstrate a range of concerns regarding the current General Education program.

### *Faculty Discussions*

Themes included:

- We need to get beyond the list mentality.
  - Using a theme (mission, DJS, something) to connect the curriculum is important.
  - Finding ways to be truly interdisciplinary is important.
  - Collaboration is necessary
- Opportunity to explore a variety of disciplines remains at the core of the experience.
- Service learning/community engagement is highly valued.
- Full-time, tenure-line faculty need to be offering these courses.

### *Student Survey*

Students were surveyed in the Fall of 2014 and asked 3 open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of the general education experience at PLU. 309 students responded to the short survey. 85% of students responded that the purpose of general education was to “become well rounded” or “be exposed to concepts beyond the major.” Less than 5% of students identified ideas such as vocation and critical thinking – two ideas at the core of the PLU mission. When asked to reflect on the attitudes and values they would carry with them after PLU due to their experience with the general education, 79% of students reported they gained an understanding and appreciation of others’ opinions, values and beliefs. However, 67% reported these experiences occurred randomly often through a single course or teacher – students were frustrated with what they considered boxes to check and hoops to jump through – they appreciated the education they obtained typically but were equally negative about requirements that were not always coherent and/or delayed graduation. When asked to provide their views on how the general education could be improved, almost 70% of students spoke to the need to better clarify and organize the general education. Students found requirements often unnecessary and a burden that delayed graduation times and hurt them financially without any recognizable gain in their educational attainment. In general, students identify an awareness of the value of others’ views through the general education experience.

Rigidity and a lack of availability of course seats were the major complaints. There was a perception that first year students fill classes and make it difficult for seniors to get the classes they need to graduate (Religion was most often cited here). Most positive comments about general education were from students that were able to understand and appreciate new perspectives. Even students frustrated with the requirements would admit they enjoyed this particular course or that particular instructor. The challenge for PLU may be to make those serendipitous occurrences more intentional and better planned from the outset.

In another survey of students participating in the March 4 Retreat, participants were asked what they believe could be done to enhance learning in general education. Students resoundingly responded that while vast pockets of innovation exist, there is a need to engage in a Socratic dialogue to give students an opportunity to think critically and independently rather than regurgitate content. The following response captures the essence of these comments: “Rather than being graded on our ability to memorize content, we should be graded on our ability to think critically and speak knowledgeably about the subject. We have to ask what the priorities are in this requirement. If they are not in our major... is it more important to memorize the meaningless details we will forget in a week? OR is it how to think and discuss the material knowledgeably in a way we can draw upon later?”

### *Faculty Survey*

Interestingly, faculty responses to a short survey prior to the March 4 Retreat were similar in tone and content to the students. Faculty felt the general education was not coherent or collaboratively delivered across the institution and this created a checklist mentality that did

not clearly communicate the meaning and purpose of the curriculum or of the unique goals of the liberal arts education at PLU. There was a sense that the current structure, while not intentional, pitted the needs of the major with the goals of the liberal arts experience and made these courses obstacles to overcome rather than core missional principles of learning. When asked what could be done to improve the general education, faculty primarily spoke to more intentional curriculum tied to core PLU values and to communicate these purposes to students in a coherent curricular path that develops student awareness and understanding of these values. Faculty responded this could primarily be accomplished by integrating courses around themes rather than in a narrow discipline, provide opportunities for faculty collaboration and experimentation and developing incentives for such activity in promotion and tenure. Faculty and students were not far off in their perception of the current state of affairs in general education at PLU. The question remaining is if the will of the community to create positive change in a constrained budgetary environment will outweigh justifiable concerns of self-interest, both personally and with respect to one's home department.

A quote from a faculty member who participated in the survey captured the essence of the comments: "I would prefer to see our general education revolve around specific outcomes and expectations in way that is clear (to us and to students), measurable (for the purposes of accreditation AND curriculum development), and in line with PLU's mission. We have so many great things going on in our courses--innovative curriculum, engaged faculty, bright students--but the educational core seems muddled and imprecise. For some (the self-motivated student), this provides an opportunity to explore and to self-define. For many (those who lack a sense for what they want to do or how they might get there), I feel like our Gen Ed model comes across as a scattered collection of courses that don't build to anything."

### *Workshops*

The March workshop resulted in six different models framed around the following guidelines:

1. Supports the PLU mission
2. 8 courses (can include non-course based elements)
3. No more than three learning goals
4. Must be developmentally coherent
5. Identify a signature element of a Pacific Lutheran education for your program

Six models were developed and presented. See Appendix C and D.

The council met in May to map out a developmental continuum. See Appendix E.

### Response/Next Steps

After the March workshop, the council determine that a day-long workshop to further develop models would be appropriate. Planning for the workshop determined an August date.

In April 2015, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation invited PLU to apply for a \$100,000 grant to support the revision of General Education. The grant proposal framed the development of a pilot General Education program, coming from the on-going work of the council during this academic year. The development of this pilot program will be the focus of next year's work.

**General Education Assessment Initiative  
Pacific Lutheran University**

REVISED DRAFT 5/19/2014

The General Education Council, in collaboration with the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs and the Office of University Assessment, Accreditation, and Research, proposes an initiative to support the assessment of PLU's General Education Program in ways that honor the multiple layers of ownership that embrace the importance of this foundational program. On one level, the departments and schools who house particular General Education elements are responsible for determining the assessment of content level objectives. On another, the Integrative Learning Objectives are integrated at a holistic level, where assessment of student learning can be considered more developmental, and hence, elusive. However, at another level, it is important to acknowledge the holistic nature of these outcomes as portrayed via the integrative nature of this foundational set of knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes.

The Council proposes an assessment model that:

- Asks faculty to consider important questions about the effectiveness and quality of our General Education program: Does this General Education program provide opportunities for students to gain what we expect and value?
- Focuses on specific evidence of student learning (e.g. application (research, projects, etc and reflection (student stories, etc.).
- Builds upon current assessment structures within departments and schools.
- Integrates into current faculty workload demands.
- Provides opportunities for faculty to engage in robust "closing the loop" conversations in ways that encompass a pan-university vision.

Three (four) data points build the basis for this model:

1. Student survey and interview data, built around student experiences with the General Education program as well as the ILOs.
2. Specific evidence of student learning of element learning objectives.
3. Specific evidence of student learning of particular ILO attitudes, skills, and abilities.
4. The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)??

The goal is to provide multiple points for triangulation of data, across clear evidence of student learning as well as self-reported, reflective evidence directly from students.

## **Student Survey and Interview Data**

The Council has conducted a student survey each Spring since 2010. This survey asks students about their experiences in the General Education program. Particular ILOs have been included each year, one ILO per year. The survey is sent to a random sample of 100 students by each cohort year (first-year, sophomore, junior, senior). The student interviews are held every other year with first-year and senior students, based on a random sample of ten students per cohort.

## **Element Learning Outcomes**

As noted on the websites for both the department/school aligned with particular elements and General Education, there are specific learning outcomes for each element. However, more specific attention can be put to discovering more robust methods for implementing ways to gather specific evidence of student learning at this level, and consequently, to engage faculty in conversations about the effectiveness, quality, and success of student learning within the General Education program at PLU.

Initially, the assumption remains that the content learning outcomes are the focus, and that students will find ways to synthesize the overall connections found across their general education experience. The ILOs are embedded, but are perhaps not always the critical focus of the outcomes being assessed. However, we hope that the conversations that emerge will question if this is, indeed, the focus of the General Education goals and objectives.

This initiative proposes a collaborative approach that includes support and resources from UAAR and the Provost's Office to work with units who provide curriculum for particular elements to determine a way to collect student evidence that demonstrates students have achieved the learning outcomes listed for the element(s) in consistent ways. The goal is to have documentable evidence of student outcomes from student and faculty perspectives, from which faculty can consider the quality and effectiveness of the General Education curriculum.

### **The Process:**

Year One (2014-15): At the School and Division level, a plan for engaging faculty in a conversation around the quality and effectiveness of the General Education program overall, then with a critical conversation and review of the elements within the particular content purview of the unit. General survey and interview data from the past four years (General Education and FYEP, NSSE re: ILOs) will be provided; UAAR can provide other pertinent data upon request. Resources to support will be available via UAAR and the Office of the Provost/General Education. The goal is to create a plan for gathering and reviewing meaningful student evidence that reflects the quality, effectiveness, and impact of the General Education program at PLU.

This plan can include retreat work, conference attendance, etc.  
GenEd Council and UAAR can offer workshops.

Veazey and Lewis are also resources.

Lewis and Veazey will meet with each division and school for an initial conversation that includes two talking points: 1) Does our General Education program/curriculum work overall? Are the desired outcomes met? How do we know? 2) For the element(s) particular to your division/school, are the desired outcomes met? How do you know? From these conversations, a strategy for coming up with evidence regarding student learning will be constructed.

Year Two (2015-16): Implement the plan to gather evidence. Fall Conference emphasis??

Gen Ed Element	Department A	Department B	Department C	
<b>GROUP ONE: Interdisciplinary, Ongoing</b>				
FYEP	FYEP faculty/steering committee	Discipline departments for 190s		Currently every year, move to alternating years for 101, 190
IHON	IHON faculty/steering committee			Currently working on pre/post learning autobiography
Perspectives on Diversity	All departments	-->		Ongoing, within each unit review, based upon DJS recommendations
Capstone				Ongoing
<b>GROUP TWO: Division and School</b>				
Arts	Art	Music	Theatre	
PE	KINS			
Humanities				
Literature	English	Lang/Lit		
Philosophy	Philosophy			
Religion	Religion			
Natural Sciences				
Math Reasoning	Math	Computer Science	Statistics	
NS/CS/M	Math	Computer Science	Biology Chem Geos Physics	
Scientific Method	Bio	Geos	Chem Physics	
Social	Anthro	Econ	History	

Sciences				
	Pols	Psyc	Sociology	
	Social Work			

### **Benchmarks for Integrative Learning Objectives**

At a basic level, the ILOs represent the critical skills, abilities, and attitudes we expect our students to reflect as they complete their education at PLU. On one hand, critical thinking, reading, and writing, as well as the ability to work collaboratively with peers in effective and creative ways, are the basis of the skills and abilities that can be shown through student artifacts. On the other, the valuing and multiple perspectives ILOs manifest themselves in a wider array of student evidence both from within and outside of the classroom but within PLU-associated activities and experiences.

#### Pilot Assessment: Critical Reading, Writing, and Thinking

The First-Year Experience Program has created rubrics for assessing writing and thinking skills for the FYEP/WRIT 101 courses. Data has been collected since the 2010-11 academic year. This pilot initiative considers how student development of writing might be tracked beyond this initial point. The two additional assessment points would be at 1) a 300-level writing intensive course within the discipline (for many majors, this is a 300-level introduction to research course required of all majors), and 2) the capstone level. LEAP rubrics (AAC&U) that portray a developmental approach (from Benchmark, to Milestones, to Capstone) aligned with the current FYEP rubrics would be used to assess random samples across each program to determine student growth across experiences.

**CLA??**

**General Education at PLU**  
**Fall 2014**

Common Threads from Division/School Conversations

1. Review of the first set of discussions with divisions and schools about the success of General Education. Themes include:
  - We need to get BEYOND the list mentality. It's so much a part of the culture, that it's simply there within this configuration, no matter what kind of language we try to put around it.
  - Using a theme (the mission, DJS, something) to connect the curriculum is important.
  - Finding ways to be truly interdisciplinary—not just leaving to chance that students will put individual classes together in that way—is an important aspect of general education that we want to highlight (multiple perspectives, valuing).
  - Collaboration is necessary—to reduce the potential redundancies, to help students see and make connections.
  - Students need the opportunity to explore a variety of disciplines—to see multiple perspectives, to consider their own pathways and to discern vocation.
  - Service learning is an important part of the PLU curricular application—an important connection to mission.
  - How delivered is important—contingent vs. tenure-line folks working with students in General Education and FYEP.
2. Brainstorming Responses from the General Education Council
  - How do we include transfer students, running start students in this conversation? How do they access what we do and why we do it?
  - Messaging: GenEd needs to become something that is an “integrator”—the vehicle for the integration.
  - How can we cluster or thread courses to build the integration?
  - “Next step”: Find your place, be deliberate, find your interests, grow skills that are flexible and can apply to multiple, new careers.
  - Liberal Arts Capstones: terminal experience that helps to integrate skills and abilities in meaningful ways
  - General Education needs to be integrated into everything else you do, across all years





SOAC  
GenEd Discussion  
October 10, 2014

There is redundancy (e.g., free-lance writing in both Communication AND English).

We need to talk to each other, we are staying within our silos

How does our GenEd, in reality, relate to the mission?

How does our GenEd, in reality, help our students to ask the big questions?

Advising—should be a rich experience, where students discuss the options as they relate to their own passions, discovering their identities and vocations, and figure out the connections through conversations.

More choices—but under broader umbrellas of topics

Articulate purposes more concisely and in student terms—language is too academic

The distributive core should promote excitement to explore different disciplines . . . to the checklist mentality

This system is provides an “easy dodge”—too tempting and easy to “game the system” through double dips and other strategies.

Priority One students—research on persistence, use this to help us to best frame General Education through the first and second years in supportive ways.

Humanities Division  
General Education Conversation  
October 10, 2014

What do we mean by “optimally”—from a student or faculty perspective?  
Is it student satisfaction? Is it the number of classes we offer? The kinds of classes we offer?

What is the real goal of GenEd, underneath the ILOs?

Interdisciplinarity—GenEd should be an introduction to that. If we are doing it well, students should be able to see the connections. The values of diversity should be integrated.

Advising is a big part of this—right now, it’s about a check off. How do we move beyond that, to show students how this is part of the mission of the place?

Who do we think we are? Hypothesis that who we think we are, does not necessarily match with who our students are.

Frame big questions as the heart of general education—can we review GenEd from that kind of perspective. Where is the sense of the pragmatic—why does this matter? How does it affect me? Students do care about issues, how can these courses begin to frame the discussions. Clusters of courses, around themes?

Is there a way to sequence to help students make connections?

Transparency, connections are important

Social Science Chairs Council  
General Education Conversation  
October 13, 2014

Can IHON provide a model for us to consider? Provides the community and connections, with some choice. Biology majors now say it's a better way to get through GenEd—more efficient.

CLA data—we were above our comparative schools. Are we losing students because of the distributive core (e.g., not challenging?)

What do we mean by “optimally”? Maybe the better question is, “How do we make it better?”

UG Requirements=cafeteria style. Core II, preferred way, but left out the professional schools and natural sciences for the most part.

How can we turn GenEd into a signature program—that becomes the reason for coming to PLU?

Mission=DJS→ should be represented clearly in our GenEd. Some connection, but not throughout as a general experience by every student.

The important question: how do students meet our objectives?

This GenEd revision—wasn't it supposed to be more connected?

A success of the distributive core is that it introduces students to a major/discipline, or allows them to find a passion or pathway they might not have otherwise discovered (e.g., Economics, Sociology . . . or redirects the Psych major).

Survey of General Education overall—might help us to see how students are finding their way.

Can we describe this GenEd curriculum with more clarity and consistency—e.g., “how to live in this system?”

Thematic core—could revitalize some faculty motivation. Balance of serving both faculty and student interests

First year advising should be intensified—beyond current model of academic advising  
Perhaps service credit, to those more adept at it

Important to put tenured, excellent teachers into FYEP and early GenEd courses

Fuzzy language of GenEd; how to explain to students why they need two religion courses and a philosophy class, beyond the politics of the academy... this is a political compromise, searching for the rationale after the fact isn't necessarily the best approach

Natural Sciences  
GenEd Discussion  
October 16, 2014

I think of our GenEd as an a la carte menu at a fancy restaurant. Sometimes you make good choices that all fit together, sometimes it's just so-so, and sometimes it just doesn't make sense.

How many of our students stay an extra semester to finish off a GenEd requirement? Scheduling issues, being able to get what you need in a timely fashion is a struggle sometimes.

Some students are not conceptually-oriented—this kind of thinking can be difficult for them, so should we expect it?

A positive thing about our GenEd curriculum is that it exposes students to a wide range of disciplines, provides choices and options for finding passions.

Careers are changing—careers available 20 years ago no longer exist. A liberal arts education provides flexibility and a nimbleness to change and adapt.

What is an assessable goal for General Education? Is exposure an adequate goal? Seems we need to assess seniors and alumni on the big picture – surveys out to them? See if they can make the connections?

Writing—learning to write in the discipline . . . translating the skills students have to the appropriate task. Reflective writing is not appropriate for a lab report—students need to know the metacognitive skills to know when to make these choices.

If we gather data about general education, or assess with a signature assignment to meet a particular goal, what will we do with the data?? Need to make sure there is a complete structure in place.

Two systems—do we need both??

Nursing  
GenEd Discussion  
October 15, 2014

General Education enriches nursing graduates.

Students do make the connections.

In the case of transfer students, being in classes with the 4-year PLU students does provide cross fertilization . . . shows up in the portfolios. (Nursing is one of the few departments that includes the ILOs in their portfolio reflections, as an accreditation requirement).

General education shows them the “messiness of the world”—things are not straightforward, dealing with ambiguity.

Alumni surveys would help with understanding how general education has served students.

Another way—which gened courses are always full, which are hard to get into? Another perspective.

Collaborative teaching of particular courses, e.g., a religion class on healing and spirituality, or death and dying, or . . . specifically for nursing students (parallel to business ethics in philosophy).

Education Department  
General Education Discussion  
September 22, 2014

“Optimally serving students”

Probably not.

No common thread, or way to connect. Connections are left to students, nothing intentional.

FYEP does this reasonably well . . . themes seem to work with writing course; 190s offer support in similar ways

FYEP: Common reading, opportunities for faculty to connect, to talk to each other in ways that General Education instructors can't.

First year students: a time of cognitive dissonance, need to remember that the NSSE data might be reflecting some of that

Who teaches the GenEd courses? Long-time faculty or contingent faculty, sabbatical replacements?

The General Education curriculum is absent synthesis; there is no, at least intentional, collaboration; synthesis is not asked for, supported, or modeled. How can we acknowledge and support cumulative learning?

Can we find out from our peer groups the sizes of general education courses that first-year students generally take?

Can we use IHON as a model: disaggregate retention data from IHON students to graduation—does the opportunity to engage in synthesis, make the connections make the case for this more intentional model?

First year students need the time to re-evaluate—the identity part, who am I?

As part of the first year experience, service learning seems to be a good way to help them apply, to make sense of disciplines and topics, to ask important questions

General Education should be a way to provide access, to support under-represented students, finding a way to do this would make us distinctive

Assessment: signature assignments across the discipline areas seems to make sense.



Responses to General Education at PLU  
November 14, 2014

Kinesiology Faculty: General Responses

Purpose is to broaden exposure to many ways of thinking

Supports holistic learning, other domains of life in relation to the major

Goal should be mission-based “thoughtful inquiry”

The ILOs seem to be important . . . values reflection

Students take certain courses, provides learning in relation to others

Focus on critical thinking skills

We need to think of ways to help students see beyond a checklist of things they “need” to take . . .

Examples of students (juniors/seniors) who were able to find a good fit major because of the General Education curriculum.

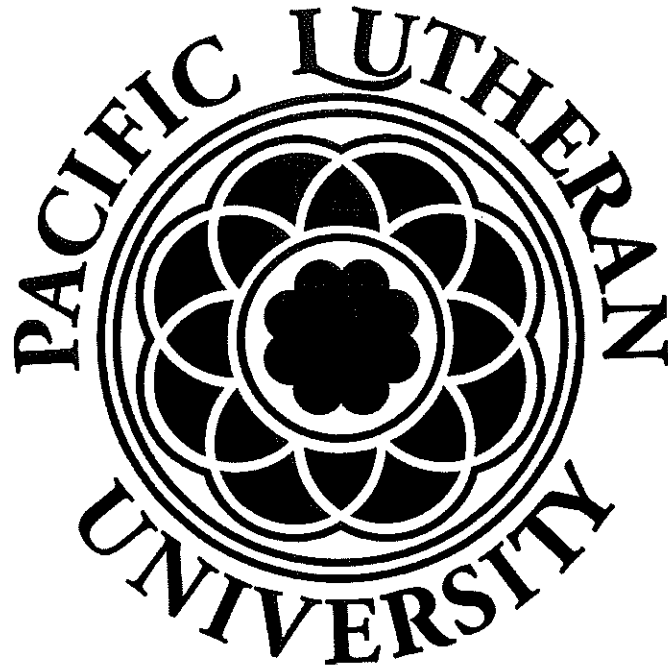
Business Faculty: General Responses

Course based vs. goal based—each unit has evaluative credit . . . Business students really get caught in the pre-requisite courses that are housed outside of the School of Business if transfer credits are not accepted. Adds to the courses they need to take at PLU.

Counselors at the community colleges are telling students to not come to PLU because of this.

The value for General Education is seen after the fact.

How do we help students see this—make it obvious as to the benefits of what our General Education courses can do for individuals.



**The  
General Education  
Liberal Arts Experience**

*Some Context and Summary of Discussion at the*

*March 4, 2015*

*Liberal Arts Experience Retreat*

## Contents

### *Executive Summary*

### *Context*

### *Day of Retreat*

Faculty & Student Perceptions of the Current PLU General Education  
General Education Discussion & Models

### *Retreat Participant Comments*

What Surprised You?  
What Should Be Next Steps?

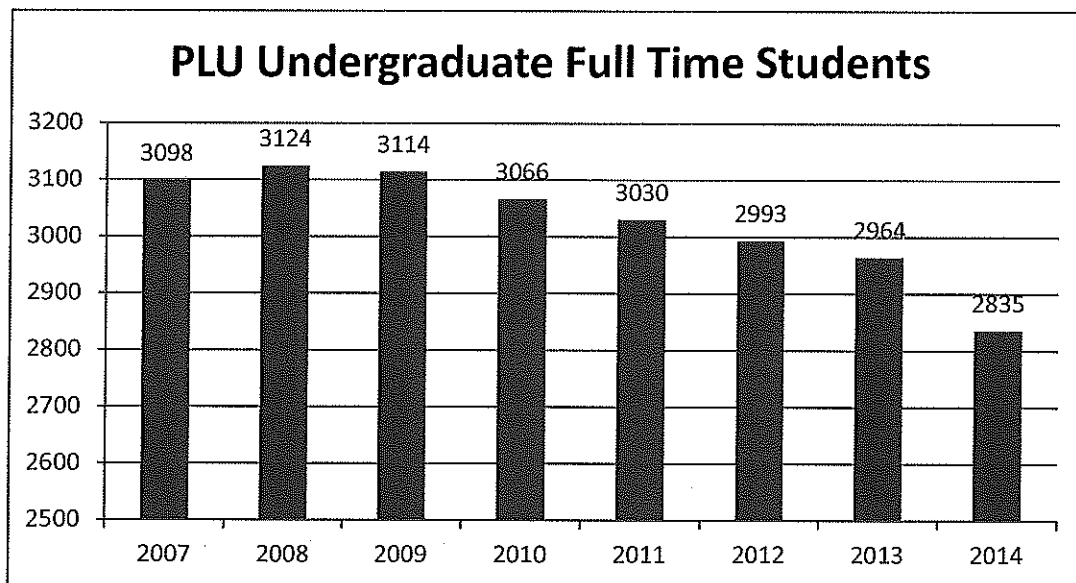
## *Executive Summary*

Below are summary statements regarding the outcomes of the General Education – Liberal Arts Retreat held at PLU on March 4, 2015 attended by faculty, staff and students.

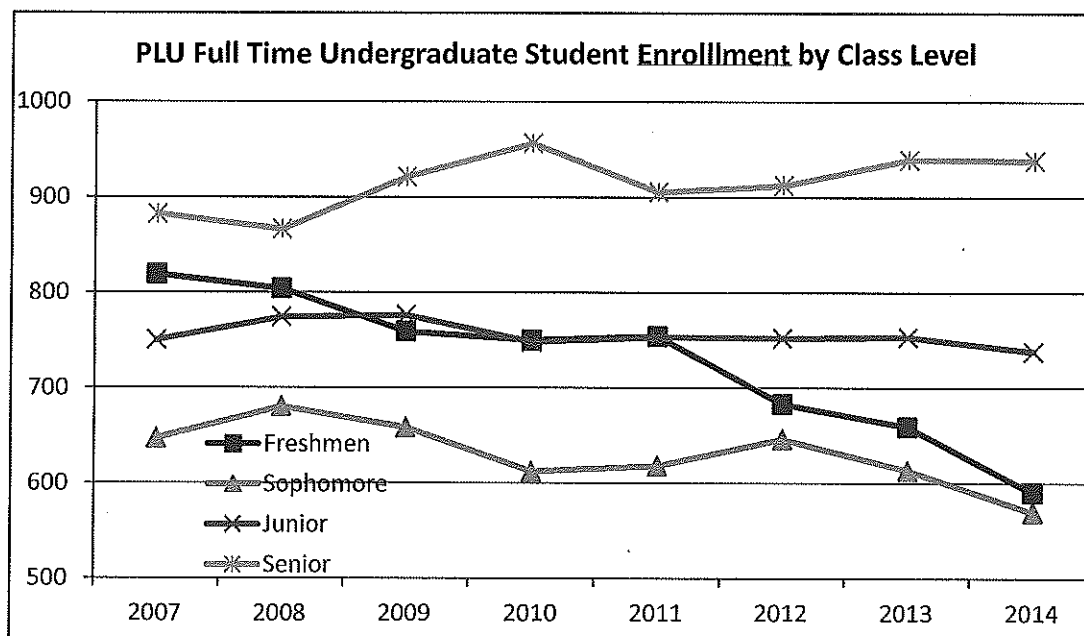
- There is consensus the current general education program is disjointed, incoherent and does not explicitly and with intention address institutional goals.
- Creation of curricular coherence with clear developmental goals and laddering to explicit outcomes in the general education was supported.
- Participants were pleased with the open dialogue and willingness to change. There was a desire to continue the conversation and not permit unforeseen resistance prevent improvement.
- Creation of small Socratic courses, team taught and inter-disciplinary in nature was a major theme. Such a structure permits curricular coherence, communication, on-going assessment of student learning, embedded faculty development, faculty mentoring support and is consistent with the mission of PLU.
- A smaller general education program was supported by the group – while concerns were identified regarding departmental staffing as a result of a rapid and large change, it was clear these issues should be used to drive innovative team teaching and inter-disciplinary learning and not stop progress. Students agreed.
- Incremental change was supported in the form of a pilot.
- Faculty reward structures need to be incorporated during any modification to create a sustainable general education.
- Resources for faculty innovation are required. A strongly supported review cycle is necessary to prevent curricular drift.
- Other issues of equal importance were the development of a transfer course, involvement of student life in any new developments and the creation of a General Education capstone.

## Context

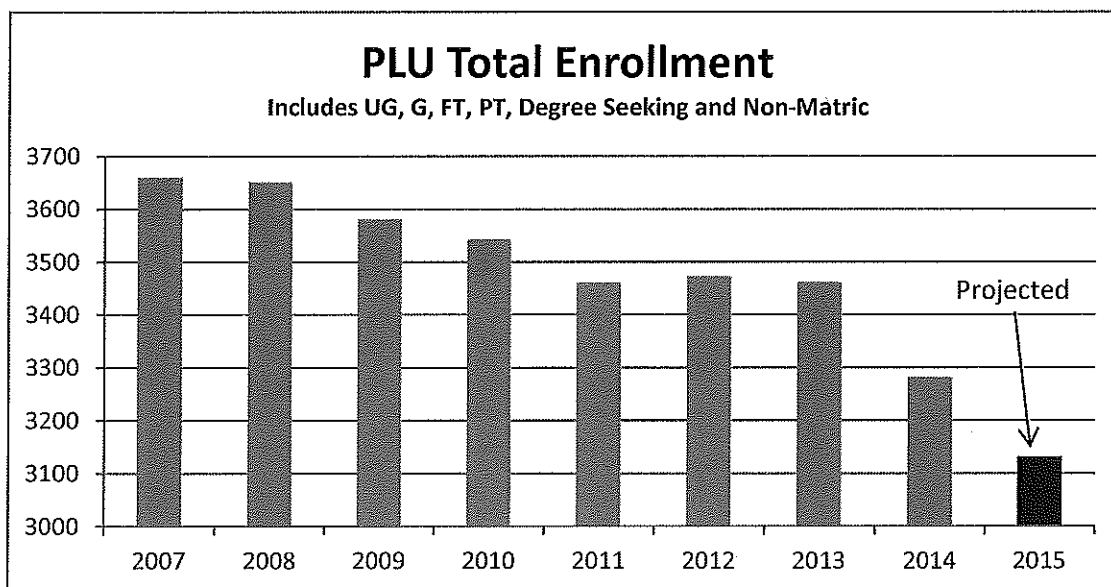
Pacific Lutheran University is currently experiencing a shifting of the sands. Since 2008, the enrollment of undergraduate full-time students has declined by 289 (9%). The traditional mission and purpose of PLU is to educate freshmen-entering residential students; the tuition and fees captured from this population provides the bulk of the financial resources required to advance that mission.



The decline in enrollment is anticipated to continue into the 2015-16 academic year due to a large class of seniors expected to graduate in the near term.



Overall enrollment including part-time and graduate students has also declined – 379 students since 2007 (10%) and is anticipated to decrease further in the 2015-16 academic year even further, representing an almost 15% reduction over eight years.



The decline in student enrollment has not been mirrored by a concomitant reduction of instructional and staffing levels creating current budget shortfalls. Budget constraint is anticipated to continue into the 2015-16 year given the movement of a large senior class to graduation. A reasonable scenario anticipates a flattening of enrollment to a steady-state level starting in the 2016-17 academic year but this is not guaranteed.

For the past 20 years, freshmen-to-sophomore retention at PLU has been above 80% and below 85%. One has a captive audience in the freshmen class. These students have chosen PLU already and it is a fiscally sound and sensible strategy to identify ways to prevent 20% of the freshmen class from exiting the institution each year thereby requiring the need to backfill enrollment by chasing new students for the following year.

Students also leave the institution prior to graduation after returning for the sophomore year; the retention rates for sophomores and juniors is typically above 90%. Given the current academic profile and demographics of the student body, the unpredictable nature of each individual and the challenges life and learning presents, perhaps PLU might be satisfied with retention rates above 90%. As retention increases, institutional strategies to retain the few that leave become more difficult to implement. The table on the next page lists the retention and graduation of first time freshmen at PLU since 2008.

**SIX-YEAR RETENTION TABLE - All Freshmen**  
**New Freshman Students (FT and PT) - All**  
**Entering Fall Semester Only**

	1st Fall	2nd Fall	3rd Fall	4th Fall	5th Fall	6th Fall	7th Fall
<b>2008 Freshmen*</b>	<b>714</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>509</b>	<b>465</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>
% enrollment	100.0%	81.4%	71.3%	65.1%	15.1%	2.4%	0.4%
% dropout	0.0%	18.6%	27.9%	30.5%	32.8%	31.9%	31.8%
% graduating	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%	4.3%	52.1%	65.7%	67.8%
<b>2009 Freshmen</b>	<b>716</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>529</b>	<b>489</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>--</b>
% enrollment	100.0%	82.0%	73.9%	68.3%	15.8%	2.2%	
% dropout	0.0%	18.0%	25.8%	28.9%	32.1%	31.1%	
% graduating	0.0%	0.0%	0.3%	2.8%	52.1%	66.6%	
<b>2010 Freshmen</b>	<b>689</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>515</b>	<b>478</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>
% enrollment	100.0%	81.9%	74.7%	69.4%	13.1%		
% dropout	0.0%	18.1%	24.8%	27.9%	29.0%		
% graduating	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	2.8%	57.9%		
<b>2011 Freshmen</b>	<b>731</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>534</b>	<b>484</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>
% enrollment	100.0%	82.8%	73.1%	66.2%			
% dropout	0.0%	17.2%	25.7%	28.7%			
% graduating	0.0%	0.0%	1.2%	5.1%			
<b>2012 Freshmen</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>518</b>	<b>447</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>
% enrollment	100.0%	81.8%	70.6%				
% dropout	0.0%	18.2%	28.1%				
% graduating	0.0%	0.0%	1.3%				
<b>2013 Freshmen</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>528</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>
% enrollment	100.0%	81.5%					
% dropout	0.0%	18.5%					
% graduating	0.0%	0.0%					
<b>2014 Freshmen</b>	<b>574</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>	<b>--</b>
% enrollment	100.0%						
% dropout	0.0%						
% graduating	0.0%						

For every 100 freshmen students entering PLU in the Fall semester, approximately 67 will graduate in six years. 20 students depart after the first year, 8 depart after the sophomore year and an additional 5 leave and do not graduate. A reasonable approach would be to investigate some of the most common reasons students leave the institution.

In the Spring of 2013 the PLU faculty ARTS committee approached an understanding of this attrition by surveying graduating students at the completion of their academic journey.

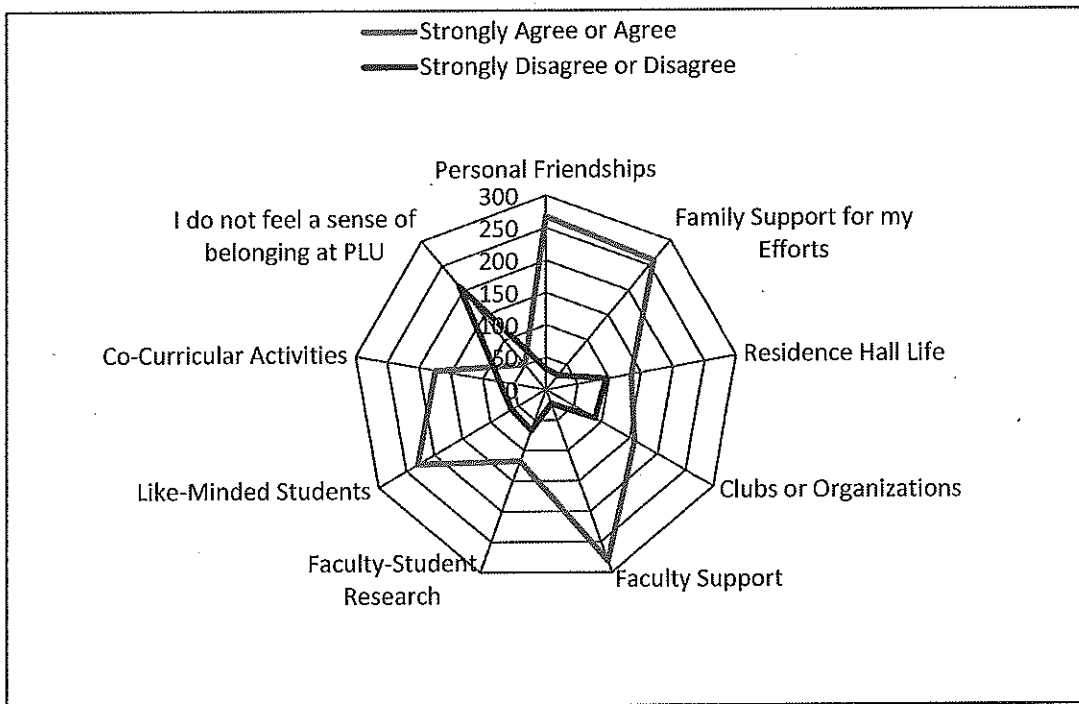
According to students, there are two major reasons most students depart PLU prior to graduation: *cost* and a *feeling of isolation*. Modifying financial aid to adjust the cost of attendance is a difficult issue to resolve but it seems sensible to have some clarity on why students feel isolated, don't feel as though they belong on campus or claim to be a poor fit.

Below is a word cloud resulting from the open-ended student responses when asked why they believe they succeeded at PLU.





Below is the student response to the prompt, "I feel a sense of belonging at Pacific Lutheran because of..."



The answers point to a theme of relationship as being the driving force behind success. To the extent PLU can create programs and services that elicit positive relationships it seems reasonable retention and graduation rates would increase. The chart above does not mean to suggest that co-curricular activities, faculty research, residence life and the like are not important. Rather, it is the positive relationships that result from activities that create the motivation to succeed.

### Summary

The enrollment and budget environment have created momentum at PLU to look closer, deeper and more realistically at the steps the institution might take to not only survive the retrenchment but to come out of the other side a newly revitalized and distinctive institution.

One aspect of the enthusiasm to create distinctiveness at PLU has been a frank and open discussion about the current quality, intention and student experience of the general education curriculum. Such conversation is ripe fodder for a contentious atmosphere of fear and blame.

"I agree PLU needs to make some changes but nothing we do can negatively impact my classroom or my department," is a common refrain in higher education during such times and divisiveness and a closing of the ranks is typical.

With a strong shared governance system a willingness to maintain the status quo by refusing to change could become problematic at PLU. Fortunately, at the present time and as a result of enlightened leadership both in the administration and faculty, PLU is looking closely at the conditions and possible options for the future – difficult decisions still lie ahead.

Given what is known about student success at PLU, it seems reasonable to approach the general education discussion from a framework of building community and connection for students with faculty, staff and peers. To the extent any new changes in the general education curriculum create or enhance a "learning community" atmosphere, it appears likely retention and graduation rates will increase.

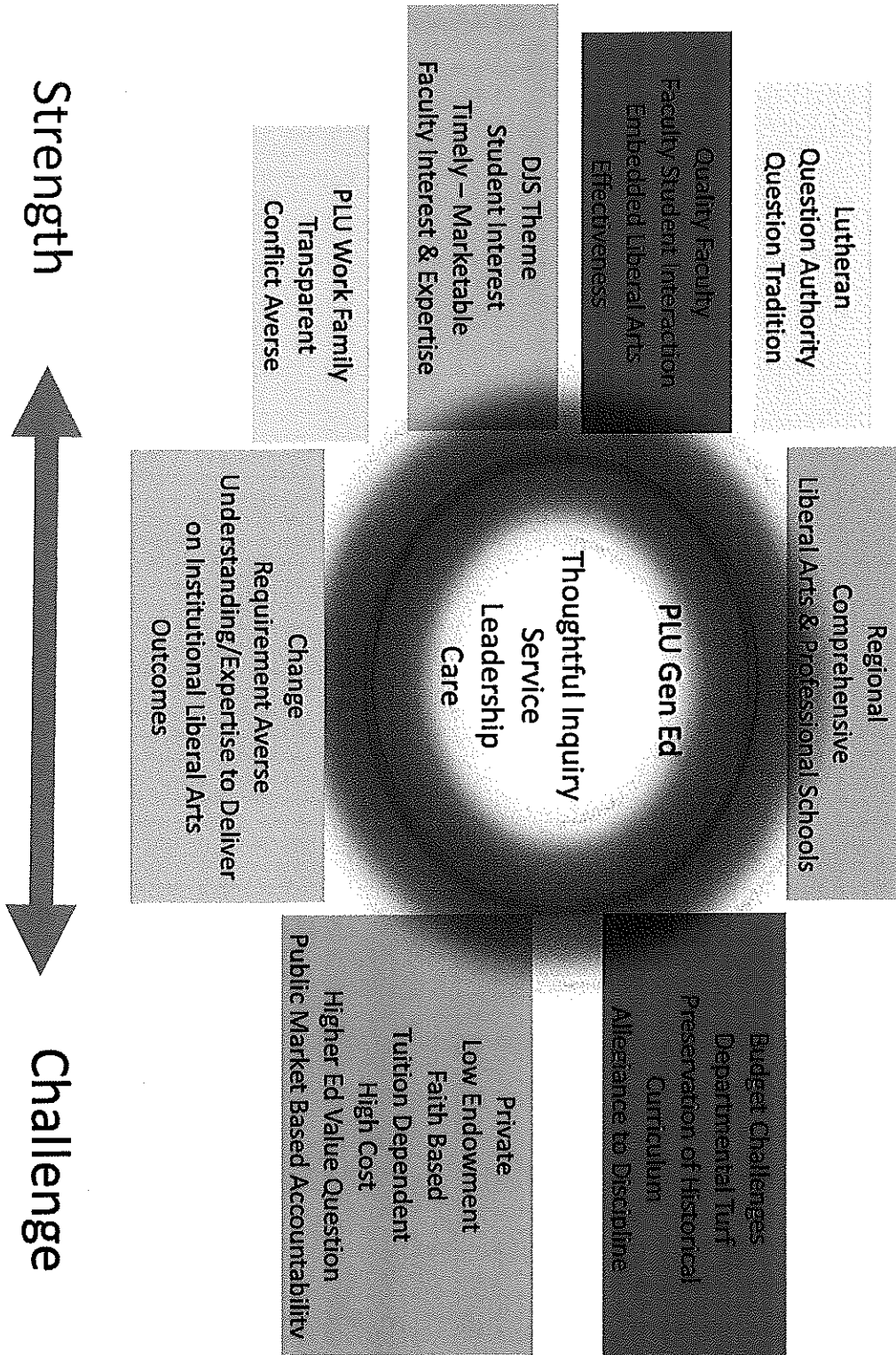
#### *The Research Says...*

Not surprisingly, research clearly shows strong faculty-student interactions that would result from a learning community approach also lead to higher gains in student learning. While the gap between what makes a difference in student learning and the measures used to allegedly indicate quality in higher education is a chasm of gaping proportions, it is in the learning community approach where both camps can find positive results.

Research shows that the common metrics of institutional quality such as national rankings (this will include retention and graduation rate figures as these are a reflection of the socioeconomic status of the student), selectivity, teaching load and even instructional resources dedicated to instruction are in no way correlated with gains in student learning. It is not the prestige or even the money an institution throws at solutions that make a difference. It is quality teaching practices and institutional conditions that promote student learning that do.

These include quality teaching such as prompt feedback, organized classes with frequent use of examples, teacher knowledge of individual student learning progress and mechanisms that provide on-going support for the majority of faculty to be engaged collaboratively in continuously evaluating the effectiveness of their teaching (think general education structure here). Other conditions include interest on the part of faculty and staff in student welfare inside and outside the classroom, multiple opportunities to engage in challenging work that requires effort, syntheses and higher-order intellectual activities. Lastly, the opportunity for students to engage in frequent, serious and meaningful interactions with people different from themselves leads to gains in student learning, retention and graduation.

Below is a visual graphic displaying one way to view the current environment regarding incremental modifications to the PLU General Education – Liberal Arts Experience. It is useful only in the sense that one might be able to recognize and deal with barriers while also move towards utilizing the cultural characteristics that might engender positive change.



## *Day of Retreat*

### **Faculty & Student Perceptions of the Current PLU General Education**

#### *Students*

Students were surveyed in the Fall of 2014 and asked 3 open-ended questions regarding their perceptions of the general education experience at PLU. 309 students responded to the short survey.

85% of students responded that the purpose of general education was to “become well-rounded” or “be exposed to concepts beyond the major.” Less than 5% of students identified ideas such as vocation and critical thinking – two ideas at the core of the PLU mission.

When asked to reflect on the attitudes and values they would carry with them after PLU due to their experience with the general education, 79% of students reported they gained an understanding and appreciation of others’ opinions, values and beliefs. However, 67% reported these experiences occurred randomly often through a single course or teacher – students were frustrated with what they considered boxes to check and hoops to jump through – they appreciated the education they obtained typically but were equally negative about requirements that were not always coherent and/or delayed graduation.

When asked to provide their views on how the general education could be improved, almost 70% of students spoke to the need to better clarify and organize the general education. Students found requirements often unnecessary and a burden that delayed graduation times and hurt them financially without any recognizable gain in their educational attainment.

In general, students identify an awareness of the value of others’ views through the general education experience. Rigidity and a lack of availability of course seats were the major complaints.

There was a perception that first year students fill classes and make it difficult for seniors to get the classes they need to graduate (Religion was most often cited here). Most positive comments about general education were from students that were able to understand and appreciate new perspectives. Even students frustrated with the requirements would admit they enjoyed this particular course or that particular instructor. The challenge for PLU may be to make those serendipitous occurrences more intentional and better planned from the outset.

In another survey of students participating in the March 4 Retreat, participants were asked what they believe could be done to enhance learning in general education. Students resoundingly responded that while vast pockets of innovation exist, there is a need to engage in a Socratic dialogue to give students an opportunity to think critically and independently rather than regurgitate content. The following response captures the essence of these comments:

*"Rather than being graded on our ability to memorize content, we should be graded on our ability to think critically and speak knowledgeably about the subject. We have to ask what the priorities are in this requirement. If they are not in our major... is it more important to memorize the meaningless details we will forget in a week? OR is it how to think and discuss the material knowledgeably in a way we can draw upon later?"*

### *Faculty*

Interestingly, faculty responses to a short survey prior to the March 4 Retreat were similar in tone and content to the students. Faculty felt the general education was not coherent or collaboratively delivered across the institution and this created a checklist mentality that did not clearly communicate the meaning and purpose of the curriculum or of the unique goals of the liberal arts education at PLU.

There was a sense that the current structure, while not intentional, pitted the needs of the major with the goals of the liberal arts experience and made these courses obstacles to overcome rather than core missional principles of learning.

When asked what could be done to improve the general education, faculty primarily spoke to more intentional curriculum tied to core PLU values and to communicate these purposes to students in a coherent curricular path that develops students awareness and understanding of these values. Faculty responded this could primarily be accomplished by integrating courses around themes rather than in a narrow discipline, provide opportunities for faculty collaboration and experimentation and developing incentives for such activity in promotion and tenure.

Faculty and students were not far off in their perception of the current state of affairs in general education at PLU. The question remaining is if the will of the community to create positive change in a constrained budgetary environment will outweigh justifiable concerns of self-interest, both personally and with respect to one's home department.

A quote from a faculty member who participated in the survey captured the essence of the comments:

*"I would prefer to see our general education revolve around specific outcomes and expectations in way that is clear (to us and to students), measurable (for the purposes of accreditation AND curriculum development), and in line with PLU's mission. We have so many great things going on in our courses--innovative curriculum, engaged faculty, bright students--but the educational core seems muddled and imprecise. For some (the self-motivated student), this provides an opportunity to explore and to self-define. For many (those who lack a sense for what they want to do or how they might get there), I feel like our Gen Ed model comes across as a scattered collection of courses that don't build to anything."*

### **General Education Discussion & Models**

The Retreat started with a presentation by Charles Blach and Kathleen Wise from the Wabash Center of Inquiry. Research in learning was the focus of the session.

- Actual liberal arts student learning has nothing to do with the reputation, cost, ranking or instructional investment of the institution
- The variation in student learning occurs inside all institutions, not across them
- Clear and coherent presentation of goals is a predictor of student outcomes
- Encountering consistent summaries and outlines that describe the developmental continuum of learning across a curriculum leads to gains in student learning
- New learning requires previous learning – scaffolding learning with purpose
- Learning is dynamic – student should have opportunities to reflect and learn about their progress towards identifiable and communicated learning goals
- Most all institutions have distribution requirements in general education despite unique names and claims
- Distributions systems are designed at the department level making institutional learning a difficult goal
- Distribution systems operate on the assumption that transformational learning will result from a couple courses taught by multiple instructors, taken at different times in the student's career
- "Core" courses typically differ dramatically depending on who is teaching them
- Quality teaching is what matters most, not the curricular design
- Lack of coherence in sequencing is typical in general education across the country

- Instead of making the student suffer due to incoherence, the institution needs to invest in providing faculty the opportunity to develop course and program alignment

For the remainder of the day, groups were tasked to imagine a new general education curriculum under the following guidelines:

### ***Guidelines for imagining a new general education sequence***

- Supports the PLU mission
- Structure
  - 8 courses
    - *Can include non-course based elements*
  - No more than 3 learning goals
    - *Can use current learning goals or devise your own*
  - Must be developmentally coherent
    - *Builds each outcome over a longer period of time, and over multiple courses*
    - *Each learning goal must be met by at least three courses*
  - Identify a signature element of a Pacific Lutheran education for your program
    - *A key pedagogy, experience, or other tangible element that is essential to a Pacific Lutheran general education*
    - *Can be in-class or out-of-class*
- Have fun - enjoy your colleagues and their ideas
- Be practical, but not too practical
  - Roughly revenue neutral

In the process of imagining, table groups were tasked to prevent “curricular drift” and ensure there were practical steps to ensure new faculty would maintain alignment. In addition, activities and support was to be identified to ensure faculty and staff development and to review and modify, as needed, the program into the future to realize student mastery.

The remainder of this section outlines the models developed by the table groups.

## Group 1

### *Learning Outcomes*

Critical Reflection  
Multiple Frameworks  
Expression

### *Signature Element*

Diversity, Justice, Sustainability

### *Eight Courses*

Writing 101 with DJS theme	fall term
DJS Theory	J Term
Research for Social Change	spring
Community Engaged Learning	public discourse
Part 1 – Contemporary Issues	Integrated studies co-taught
Creative Expression	
Part 2 – Contemporary Issues	Interdisciplinary
Culminating Course	



## Group 2

### *Learning Outcomes*

Breadth & Depth across disciplines  
Curiosity, Creativity & Creative Thinking  
Passion for Service

### *Signature Element*

Faculty & Student Partnership for Meaningful Growth & Learning

### *Eight Courses*

Wellness, Caring & Human Connections  
Policy & Engaged Citizenship  
Communicating Across Differences  
Evidence Based Analysis  
Quantitative Reasoning  
Environmental Sustainability  
Teaching & Learning for Human Growth  
Liberal Arts Capstone

### Group 3

#### *Learning Outcomes*

Written/Oral Communication & Expression  
Multiple Frameworks  
Thoughtful/Critical Inquiry

#### *Signature Element*

Socratic Pedagogy – Dialogue Driven

#### *Eight Courses – 32 Credits*

##### Freshmen Year - 12 Credits:

Year-long seminar – writing, critical thinking  
Thematic, question driven  
J Term – Experiential/Community Engagement

##### Sophomore & Junior Year – 200 level – 12 Credits

Multiple Frameworks  
Thoughtful Inquiry  
Diversity, Justice, Sustainability Values

##### Senior Year

300 level Capstone Experience – 8 Credits  
Community Engagement – Local or Global  
Social Justice

Group 4

*Learning Outcomes*

Valuing  
Multiple Frameworks  
Critical Expression

*Signature Element*

Inter-Disciplinary Discovery

*Eight Courses*

Freshmen Year – 12 Credits

2-Semester Cohorts of 16 students (8 credits)

Common Topics across sections, readings, assignments

Seminar in discipline but connected

1 Credit course - Study Skills/ Vocation – Student Life Program

Sophomore Year – 12 Credits

Interdisciplinary Themes – 3 courses in cohorts

Topic delivered by 3 faculty from 3 disciplines

1 Credit course - Advising / Vocation

Junior Year - 300 level– 8 Credits

Integrative Course of first two years

Gen Ed Capstone

1 Credit course – Transition out of college

\*\*Add a course for Transfer Students

## Group 5

### *Learning Outcomes*

1. Methods of Inquiry
2. Expression & Dialogue
3. Citizenship & Community

### *Signature Element*

Lutes – Good Global Citizens  
Team Teaching  
Writing  
Presentations  
Service/Co-Curricular

### *Eight Courses*

- F1 Historical Perspectives (1,3)
  - Historiography to enlightenment
- S1 Contemporary Perspectives (1,3)
  - Multiple perspectives
- F1 Quantitative Approaches to Understanding (1)
  - What do we know and what does it mean?
- S1 Qualitative Approaches to Understanding (1,2)
  - What do we know and what does it mean?
- F2 Modes of Human Expression (2,3)
  - Diversity, Medium, Message, Communication
- F2 Conflict and Dialogue (2,3)
  - How do we talk about problems?
- S2 Global Perspectives (2,3)
  - Understanding others' views
- F3 Gen Ed Capstone (1,2,3)
  - Articulating our views
  - Synthesis of Gen Ed, Portfolio

## Group 6

### *Learning Outcomes*

Valuing  
Collaborative Expression  
Critical Reflection

### *Signature Element*

DJS  
Life of the Mind  
Writing

### *Eight Courses*

Freshmen Year – 8 Credits

2 DJS Courses

Seminar style

Freshmen – Mostly Sophomore Year – 16 Credits

Writing

DJS

Methods

Inter-Multi Disciplinary

Junior Year - 8 Credits

DJS Course

Synthesis/Capstone

Portfolio required for all students

## *Retreat Participant Comments*

### What Surprised You?

Participant comments were categorized and tallied:

Comment	Responses
How disjointed General Education is presently	6
Support for a Gen Ed Capstone	3
Support & Consensus for Change	18
Support for a DJS Theme	5
Support for Socratic / Team / Inter-disciplinary Teaching	6
Consensus on Ideas Expressed for a New Curriculum	7
That Student Learning is not Connected to Common Metrics	1
Agreement on Reducing the Size of Gen Ed	3

The most common surprise was the presence of individuals supportive of change to the current general education structure. Many also were primarily surprised by the consensus that developed independently regarding the specific ideas PLU should explore for such change. The consensus comments overlapped significantly with more specific comments of the group such as a focus on Socratic pedagogy, team teaching (which embeds faculty development) and inter-disciplinary courses.

### What Should Be Next Steps?

Comments regarding next steps varied considerably. Deans, faculty, staff and students all contributed and those perspectives would naturally be seen in comments about what to do as a next step. The most common comment expressed concerned the need to continue the dialogue around changes to the general education but warned that only talking would not result in change as there are significant obstacles such as budget and departmental turf and security.

There was consensus throughout concerning the pursuit of a developmental curriculum with clearly identified and communicated goals that would consistently weave throughout the general education. In addition, there was support for a smaller general education program that would not only have developmental and curricular coherence but would leave room for either exploring electives or perhaps pursuing a minor.

Significantly, one the most common concrete and actionable response was to engage in smaller learning community classes that incorporates a Socratic pedagogy with team teaching and an inter-disciplinary focus. Such a step combined with a smaller general education program more amenable to curricular scaffolding of clear goals not only would be more coherent for students but would be a structure permitting faculty to maintain the alignment of the program over time. Comments also referred to connecting courses through common readings and common assignments to provide clarity to students of the purpose of the general education, allow for peer learning communities and also be an environment that naturally creates faculty conversation and understanding regarding the curriculum, pedagogy and student performance. While not indicated in the table below, a number of individuals mentioned throughout the day the need to have an entry course for transfer students as well.

Below is a best effort in aggregating comments from participants regarding next steps:

<b>Comment</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Small Socratic Learning Communities	13
Continue to Commit to Change and Curricular Coherence	14
Continue to Gather Student Opinions	2
Incorporate Faculty Mentoring and Support	9
Make General Education Smaller – Reduce SCH Requirements	4
Create a Developmental Continuum in Gen Ed	6
Start a Pilot	2
Incorporate Student Life in a new Gen Ed	2
Incorporate Faculty Work in the Change in Rank and Tenure	1
Have a Gen Ed Capstone	1
Create a Rigorous Review Cycle to Keep Courses Aligned	1

# *General Education: Good idea in theory...*

Pacific Lutheran University

March 2015

Appendix D



Why has this concern become so strong in late years? Among many reasons three stand out: the staggering expansion of knowledge produced largely by specialization and certainly conducing to it; the concurrent and hardly less staggering growth of our educational system with its maze of stages, functions, and kinds of institutions; and not least, the ever-growing complexity of society itself. It is hard to say whether the effect of these changes has been chiefly to estrange future citizens from one another because of the very different backgrounds and forms of training from which they take up their different parts in life, or, because such masses of students have been involved, whether it has not been rather toward a stiff uniformity cramping the individual's best development. Certainly both forces have been at work. The question has therefore become more and more insistent: what then is the right relationship between specialistic training on the one hand, aiming at any one of a thousand different destinies, and education in a common heritage and toward a common citizenship on the other? It is not too much to say that the very character of our society will be affected by the answer to that question.

It is impossible to talk about general education except against this background of growth and change. We shall begin with what seem on the whole the clearer of these shaping forces, discussing here the growth of our educational system and the effects of society on it, and leaving to the next chapter the particularly vexed and murky question of the nature and organization of modern knowledge.

# *The Center of Inquiry*

- **Work with people at colleges and universities to use evidence to strengthen liberal arts education**
  - Liberal arts education is any form of education that promotes broad outcomes such as critical thinking, curiosity, moral reasoning, leadership, political engagement
- **Use a collaborative approach**
  - Work directly with faculty, staff, and students at colleges and universities to review, make sense of, and respond to evidence
- **Work with public and private institutions of all types**
- **Not affiliated with state or federal government or accreditors**
- **Not-for-profit**



A pediatric resident naps in an on-call room during an overnight shift. The TV is often left on for white noise.

## The Phantom Menace of Sleep-Deprived Doctors

Young doctors are no longer working long, stupor-inducing hours. So why aren't hospitals any safer?

*But fixating on work hours has meant overlooking other issues, like lack of supervision or the failure to use more reliable computerized records. Worse still, the reforms may have created new, unexpected sources of mistakes. Shorter shifts mean doctors have less continuity with their patients. If one doctor leaves, another must take over. Work-hour reductions lead to more handoffs of patients, and the number of these handoffs is one of the strongest risk factors for error. As a result, many hospitalized patients are at the mercy of a real-life game of telephone, where a message is passed from doctor to doctor — and frequently garbled in the process.*

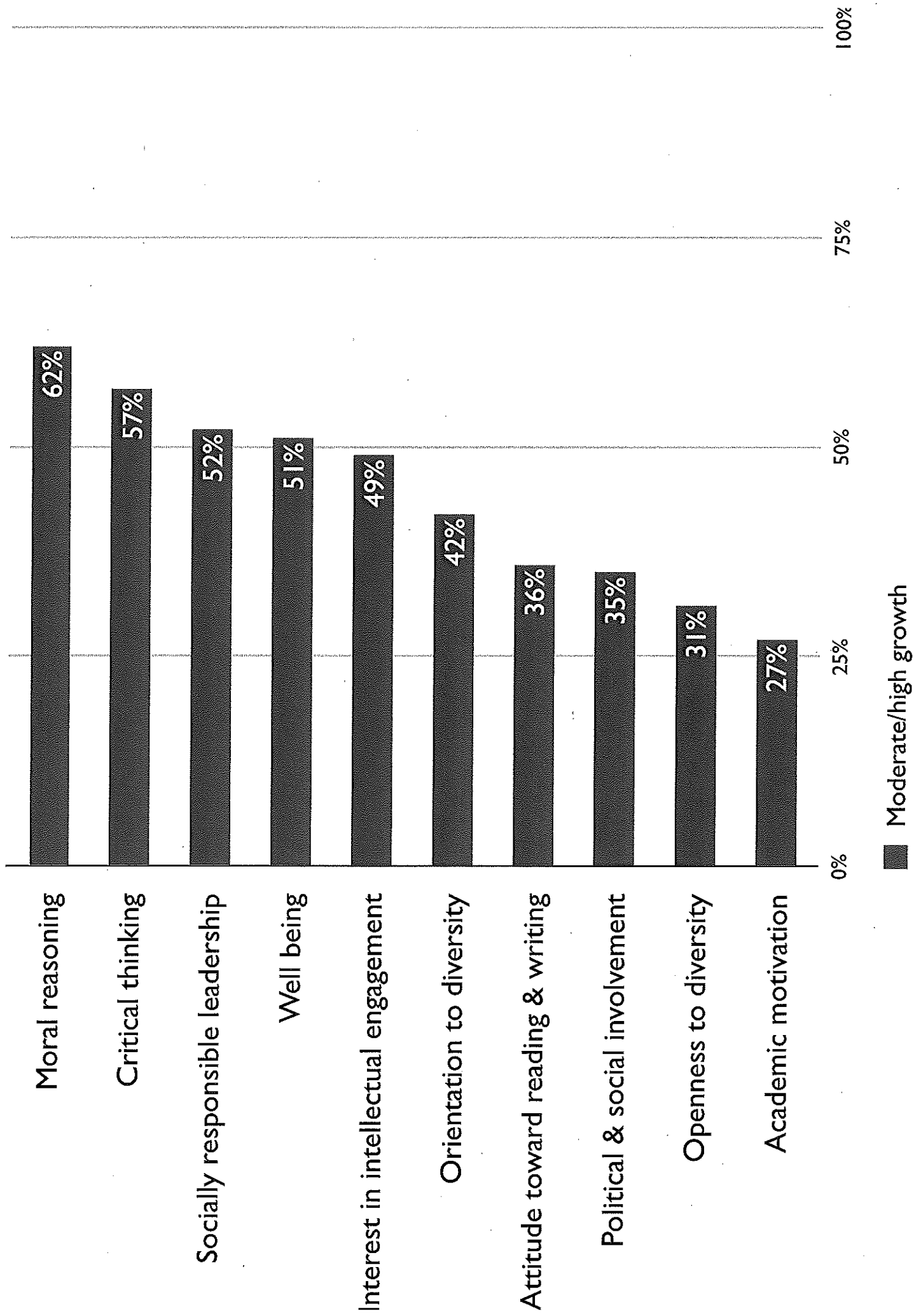
*— New York Times (2011)*

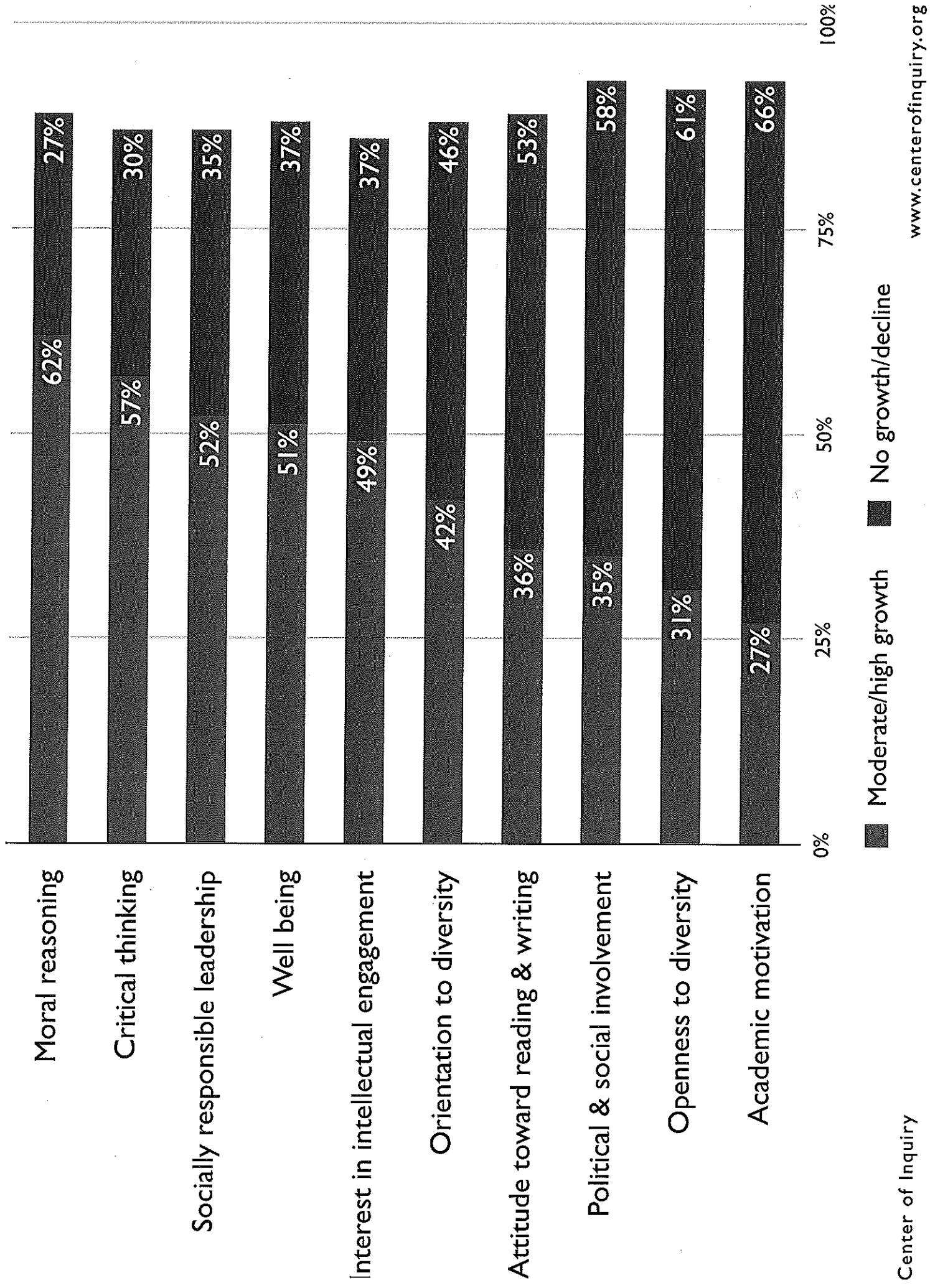
# *Wabash Study*

- 49 institutions
- 17,000 students
- Longitudinal
- Purpose
  - Identify practices and conditions that promote liberal education
  - Collaborate with teachers at institutions to use evidence for improvement

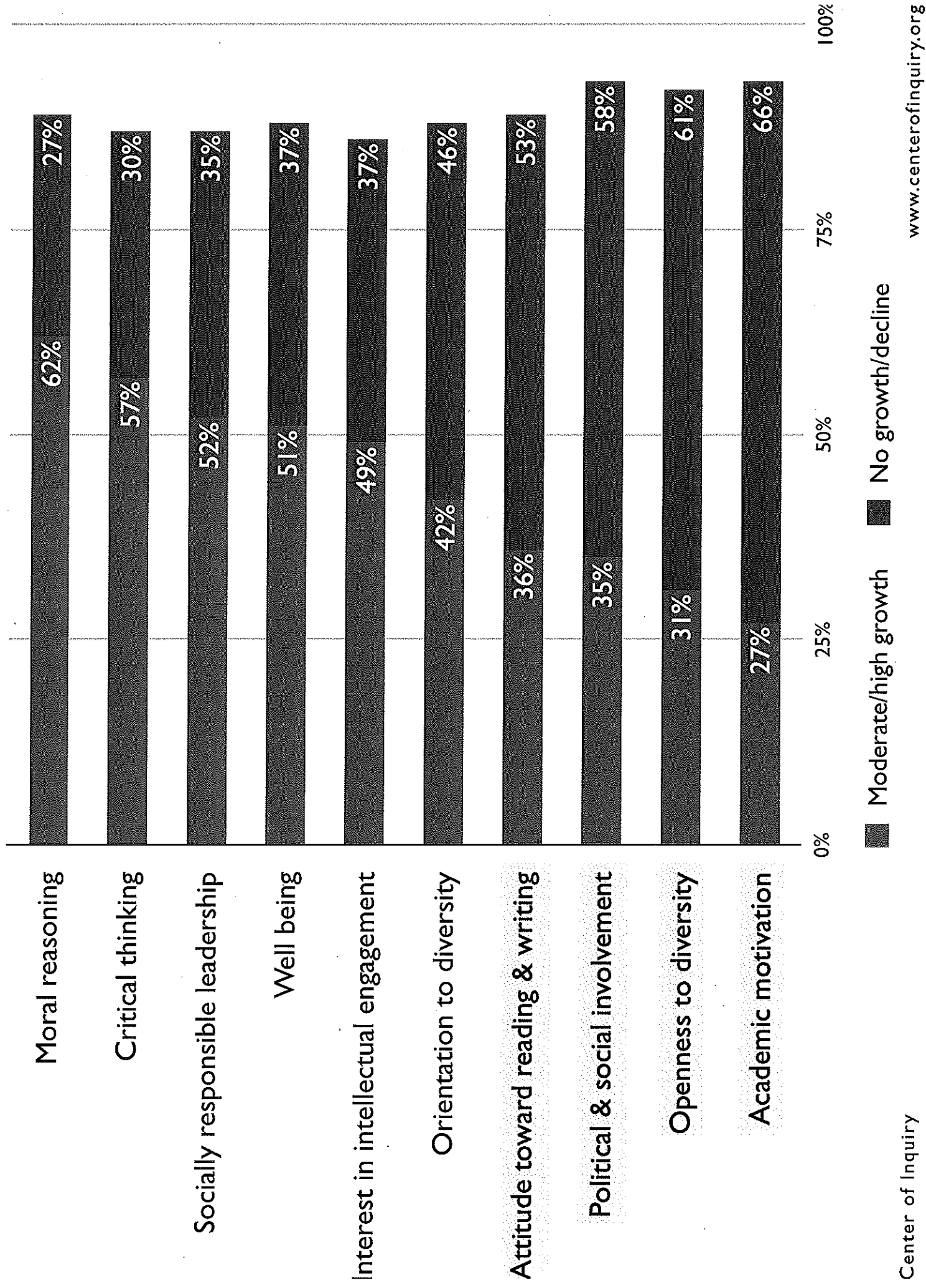
## *What did we measure?*

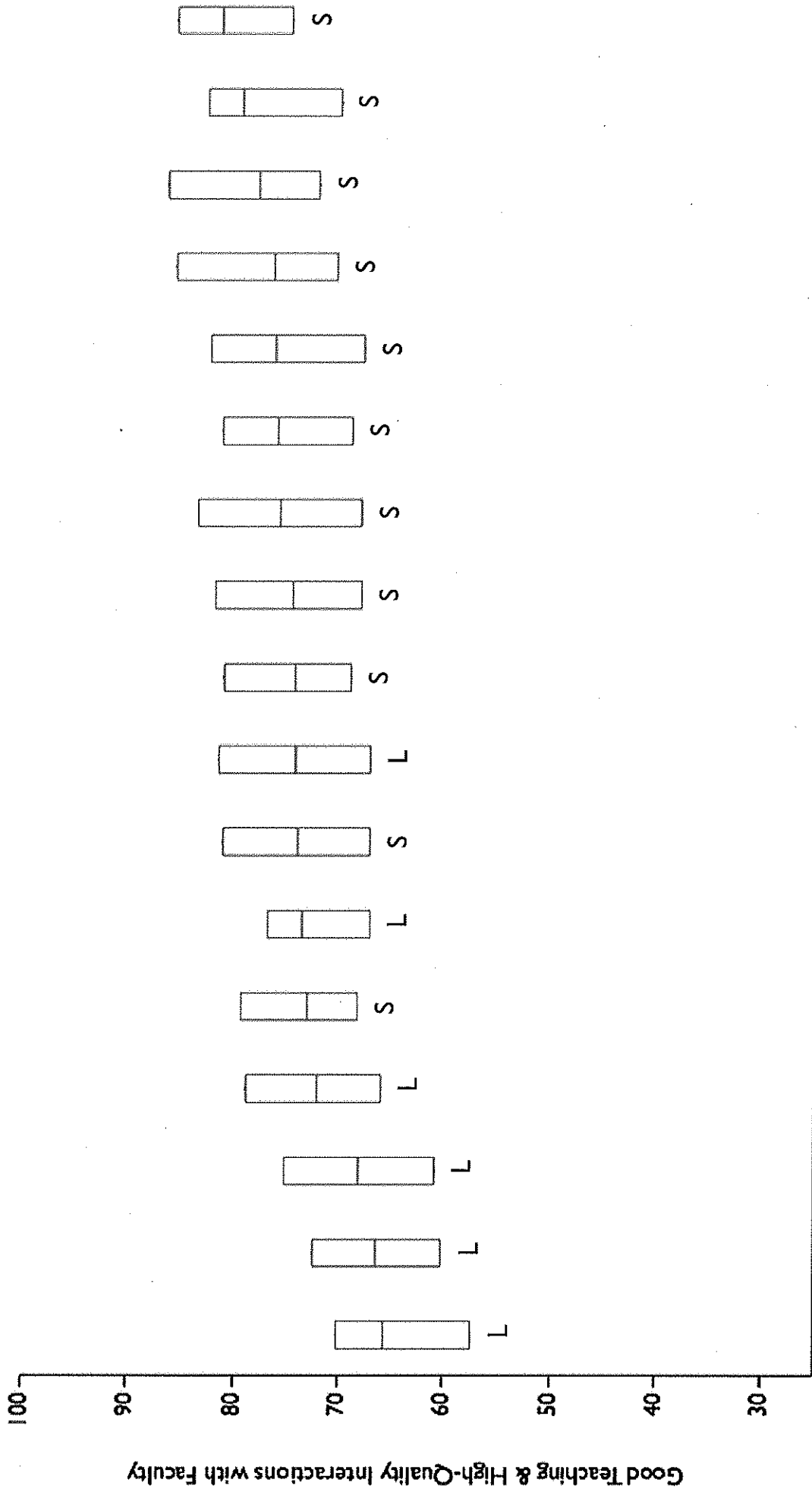
- Academic motivation
- Critical thinking
- Moral reasoning
- Orientation toward interacting with diverse people
- Interest in engaging intellectually challenging work
- Openness to engaging new ideas and diverse people
- Interest in political and social involvement
- Attitude toward reading and writing
- Well being
- Socially responsible leadership



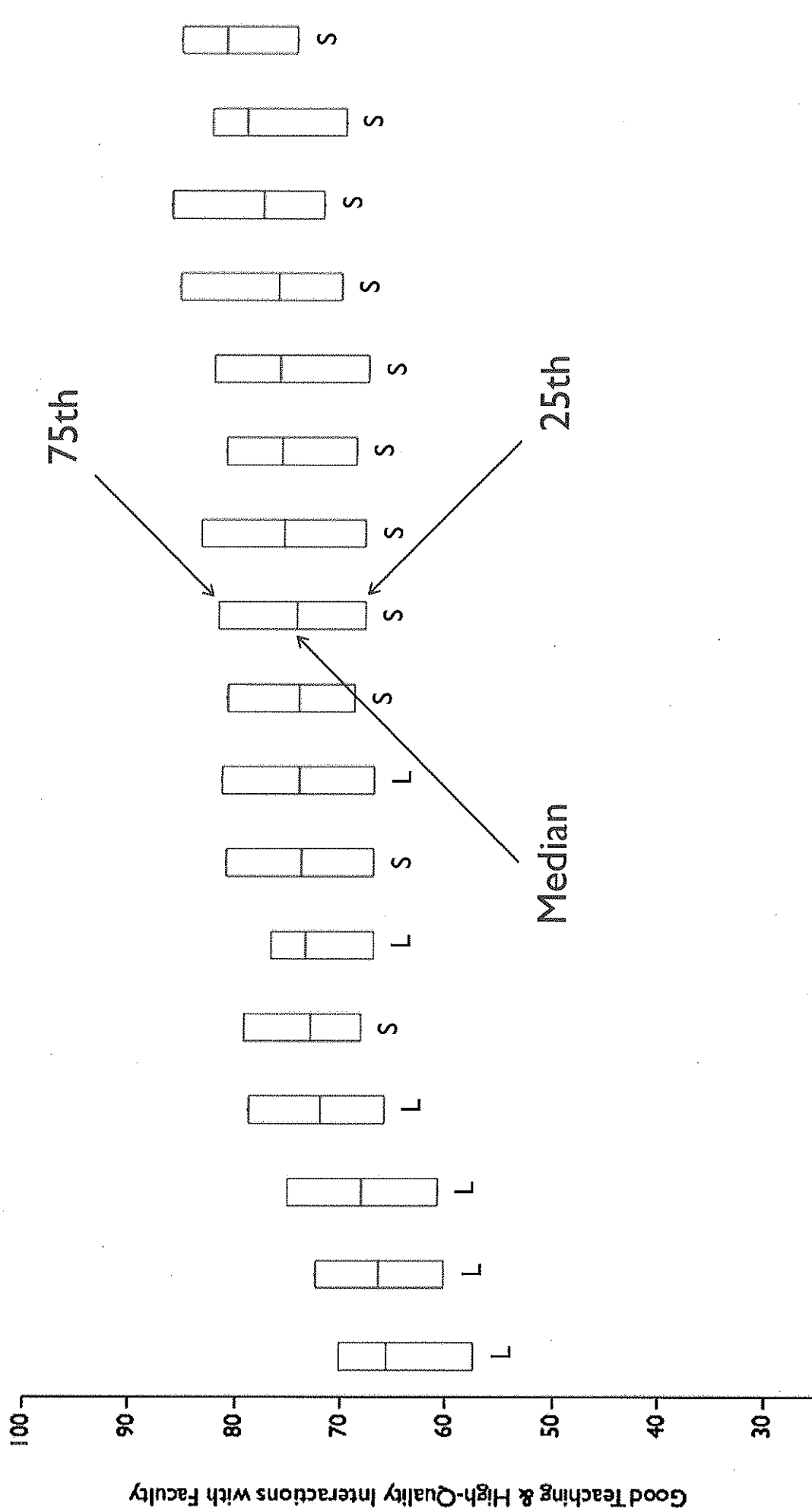




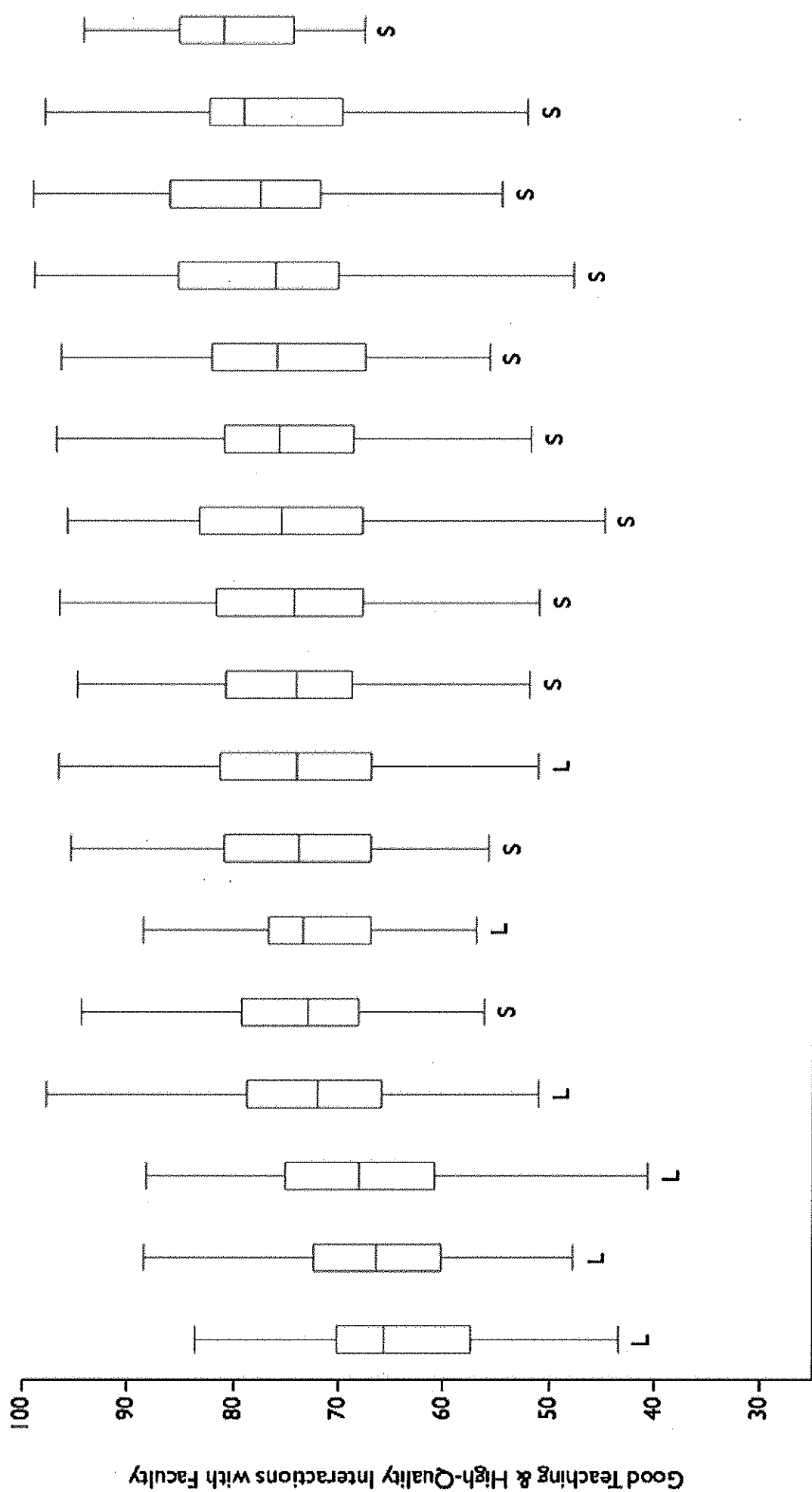




2006 Wabash National Study Institutions



2006 Wabash National Study Institutions



2006 Wabash National Study Institutions

*Could the means by which we typically implement  
general education be one of the problems?*

# *Two traditional models of general education*

- **Model I - First-year seminar**

- Two semester course, fall and spring of freshman year
- Faculty from any department and adjuncts teach the course
- Faculty choose the topic for their FYS course, but classes have the same learning goals
  - ▶ Course assignments, workload, and readings in FYS courses vary widely
  - ▶ Faculty rejected a proposal to introduce a couple of common readings
  - ▶ Faculty have not shared student work or evaluated it with shared rubrics
  - ▶ Seminar faculty spend a week together at the beginning of the year, and meet a couple of times during the year (these meetings are voluntary and attendance varies)

# *Two traditional models of general education*

- **Model I - First-year seminar**
  - Learning goals
    - ▶ Reading and analyzing a wide variety of challenging texts, asking thoughtful, increasingly complex questions of the material, in order to engage fully in class activities
    - ▶ Developing their written style, improving the mechanics and organization of their prose as well as discovering their own voice and an awareness of audience
    - ▶ Leading discussions confidently and energetically, listening actively and respectfully to others, and playing a variety of roles in an effective discussion
    - ▶ Testing and improving the quality of their thought (and their articulations of that thought) through the exchange of ideas with other persons

## *Two traditional models of general education*

- **Model 2 - Areas of Inquiry**
  - There are 10 Areas of Inquiry (AOI)
  - Students are required to take two courses in each of the following
    - ▶ *Historical Foundations*
    - ▶ *Scientific Literacy*
  - And one course in the following
    - ▶ *Artistic Experience*
    - ▶ *Critical Thinking*
    - ▶ *Global and Cultural Understanding*
    - ▶ *Information Literacy*
    - ▶ *Quantitative Literacy*
    - ▶ *The Engaged Citizen*
    - ▶ *Values and Ethics*
    - ▶ *Written Communication*
  - Students can take courses to meet AOI requirements in any sequence



# Two traditional models of general education

- Model 2 - Areas of Inquiry

- Over 500 courses can be used to fulfill meet these requirements
  - ▶ Global and Cultural Understanding - Approximately 130 courses
  - ▶ The Engaged Citizen - Approximately 100 courses
  - ▶ Artistic Experience - Approximately 50 courses
- To get course added to the approved list for one of the AOIs, faculty submit a syllabus for the course to the University Curriculum Committee and complete a short online application that
  - ▶ Explains how the course meets the learning goals for the AOI, and
  - ▶ Describes the assessment methods the faculty will use
- Courses are approved for six years
  - ▶ No review, sharing, or discussion of assessment evidence among faculty or the curriculum committee

# *Two traditional models of general education*

- **Model 2 - Areas of Inquiry**
  - At least 42 AOI learning goals
    - ▶ Artistic Experience - 5
    - ▶ Critical Thinking - 3
    - ▶ Global and Cultural Understanding - 4
    - ▶ Historical Foundations - 5
    - ▶ Information Literacy - 5
    - ▶ Quantitative Literacy - 3
    - ▶ Scientific Literacy - 5
    - ▶ The Engaged Citizen - 4
    - ▶ Values and Ethics - 5
    - ▶ Written Communication - 3

*How does the structure of these curricula intersect with  
what we know about learning?*

# What do we know about learning?

- Importance of clear goals and coherence
  - Instruction with a clear and coherent presentation of goals, tasks and contents is, thus, one of the main predictors for high student outcomes (Helmke & Weinert, 1997)
  - ▶ *To what extent are the goals, syllabi, tasks, assignments, and grading across general education courses constructed to aim at particular learning goals and aligned so that they all help students progress on these learning goals?*
- ...The use of overviews, advance organizers, outlines, and periodic summaries (Brophy & Good, 1986)
  - ▶ *Do general education programs have overviews, outlines, or summaries that students encounter repeatedly in general education courses to help them understand how they should be developing in each course on the general education learning goals?*
  - ▶ *Do faculty who teach these courses have this kind of information to guide their work?*

# What do we know about learning?

- Bransford et al (2000) on transfer
  - “All new learning involves transfer based on previous learning, and this fact has important implications for the design of instruction that helps students learn”
  - ▶ *Is general education structured so that later courses take into account what students have learned in previous general education courses and build on that knowledge?*
  - “Transfer is best viewed as an active, dynamic process rather than a passive end-product of a particular set of learning experiences”
  - ▶ *When do students have the opportunity to reflect on their progress on general education learning goals as they move through the general education curriculum? When are they assessed and given feedback about their progress on these learning goals?*

*How does what we know about student learning affect the potential impact of these general education programs?*

# *What we've learned about general education*

*We have so many great things going on in our courses--innovative curriculum, engaged faculty, bright students--but the educational core seems muddled and imprecise. For some (the self motivated student), this provides an opportunity to explore and to self-define. For many (those who lack a sense for what they want to do or how they might get there), I feel like our Gen Ed model comes across as a scattered collection of courses that don't build to anything.*

*– Pacific Lutheran Faculty Member*



# Challenges

- Regardless of the fancy names we adopt (i.e., ways of knowing, areas of inquiry, interdisciplinary, linked courses, constellations, etc.), most general education programs are distribution systems where students take an array of courses offered at an array of points in their careers
- Distribution systems, whether they are done at the department level or general education level, *are not designed with learning in mind*
- They are built on the assumption that transformational learning will result from a couple of courses, taught by multiple instructors, taken at different times in a student's career
- Even when institutions have “core” or “common” courses with common learning outcomes, sections of these courses often differ dramatically depending on who is teaching them

## *The biggest enemies of general education are*

- The variability in the quality of teaching in general education classes
  - No curriculum will overcome mediocre teaching
- Lack of coherence in the content, methods, and outcomes of different sections of the same course
- Lack of coherence in the content, methods, and outcomes of different courses that are supposed to meet the same outcomes
- Lack of coherence in the sequence in which students take courses

*I believe that our experience of teaching in hermetically sealed classrooms makes us – to coin a word – “coursecentric.” Coursecentrism – like its ethno-, ego-, and Euro- counterparts – is a kind of tunnel vision in which our little part of the world becomes the whole. We get so used to the restricted confines of our own courses that we became oblivious to the fact – or simply uninterested in it – that students are enrolled in other courses whose teachers at any moment may be undercutting our most cherished beliefs... there is something remarkable about the “almost entire lack of interest we manifest as a profession in what is going on in our colleagues' classes.”*

*– Gerald Graff (2009)*

# *Autonomy*

# Costs

- When there's a high degree of autonomy, students pay an “autonomy tax”
  - Faculty and staff work is reduced when everyone is in control of their own domain and acts according to their personal educational interests
  - Students pay a “tax” because their education is not as coherent
- **When faculty and staff collaborate to integrate their work, they pay a “working together tax”**
  - Working in community to align our courses and programs, and to assess how our work together adds up and can be improved, takes time
  - Faculty and staff pay a “tax” by allocating more time to ensure that their courses, assignments, grading, etc., aligns

# *Brainstorming plans for general education*

# *General education brainstorming*

- **Part I**
  - Imagining a new general education sequence
- **Part II**
  - Thinking about ways to prevent “curricular drift”
- **Part III**
  - Thinking about faculty/staff development for general education
- **Part IV**
  - Reflection

# Guidelines for imagining a new general education sequence

- Supports the PLU mission
- Structure
  - 8 courses
    - ▶ *Can include non-course based elements*
  - No more than 3 learning goals
    - ▶ *Can use current learning goals or devise your own*
  - Must be developmentally coherent
    - ▶ *Builds each outcome over a longer period of time, and over multiple courses*
    - ▶ *Each learning goal must be met by at least three courses*
  - Identify a signature element of a Pacific Lutheran education for your program
    - ▶ *A key pedagogy, experience, or other tangible element that is essential to a Pacific Lutheran general education*
    - ▶ *Can be in-class or out-of-class*
- Have fun - enjoy your colleagues and their ideas
- Be practical, but not too practical
  - Roughly revenue neutral



## *Part I – Imagining a new general education sequence*

1. Create a poster describing your group's design for PLU's general education program
2. Briefly describe the PLU signature element that your general education program emphasizes
3. Identify no more than three general education learning goals
4. List and briefly describe the 8 courses in your general education program
5. List which of the learning goals each course develops
6. Explain how your general education program is developmentally coherent, and systematically builds students' mastery of the learning goals you've identified
7. Identify a team member who will give a 10-minute presentation (including Q&A) on your program

## *Part II - Thinking about ways to prevent “curricular drift”*

- What processes, mechanisms, and practices would you use to ensure that over time—as new faculty teach courses in your general education program or as faculty revise existing courses—these courses still serve the same role in your curriculum?
  - You’re not trying to strangle course development or the influence of new blood, but you want things to line up so that students continue to benefit from the coherence of your program, specifically
    - ▶ *Courses remain aligned with the outcomes*
    - ▶ *Courses still build on one another*
    - ▶ *Courses continue to incorporate the signature element*

## *Part III – Thinking about faculty/staff development for general education*

- What kinds of activities, events, and other kinds of support would help the people who are responsible for this program do the following?
  - Continue to build their skills at helping the range of PLU students achieve the outcomes in your general education program
  - Develop their understanding of what their colleagues are doing and experiencing in other general education courses and experiences
  - Review, refine, and evolve the program so that it realizes its potential for student mastery of these learning goals

## *Part IV – Reflection*

- What surprised you?
- What would you like to see as a next step?

EPacific Lutheran University  
General Education

Developmental Continuum  
From GenEd Council Workshop—May 2015  
DRAFT #1

Appendix E

General Education Outcomes	Align with ILOs	First-Year Program Outcomes	“The Middle” Outcomes	Culminating Seminar	Align with 4 mission elements plus vocation???
<i>Methods of Inquiry</i>	<p><b>Knowledge Base:</b> A broad knowledge of the basic liberal arts and sciences. An understanding of the interconnections among these basic liberal arts and sciences that provide the broad framework for living with the</p>	<p>-Students will APPLY one method of inquiry to an individual research topic, FRAME specific questions around issues and concepts, UNDERSTAND there are differences across disciplines that define methods of inquiry and the framing of specific questions.</p>	<p>-Students will interact/engage with scholarship or literature in a particular field or discipline to understand the foundations of particular discipline-based ways of knowing -Students will be introduced to multiple perspectives on a singular topic or theme -Students will conduct small-size independent projects/research -Students will be able to identify arguments in scholarly articles/texts</p>	<p>-Students will explain/engage in how different disciplines may approach and contribute to the understanding of the same text, work, questions, issue, decisions. -Students will read, understand, and connect scholarly literature to make an argument. -Students will demonstrate a knowledge of methods of inquiry in different disciplines; articulate method of inquiry in</p>	

	<p>complexities of life.</p> <p><b>Critical Reflection:</b>  Select sources of information using appropriate research methods, including those employing technology, and make use of that information to carefully and critically consider issues from multiple perspectives. Evaluate assumptions and consequences of different perspectives in assessing possible solutions to</p>		<p>-Students will continue to acquire a variety of disciplinary lenses and the skills to use those lenses by applying them to questions, issues, and problems, both inductive and deductive.</p> <p>-Students will understand, through courses in different disciplines, fundamental differences in ways of knowing (which will culminate in the final seminar)—accepting validity of different kinds of inquiry</p> <p>-Students will have opportunities to develop a foundation for choosing a career</p>	<p>area of major, noting “strengths” and “limitations”; apply a method of inquiry in an area other than area of major (by then they should know their majors)</p> <p>-Students will be able to develop a suitable research question; e.g., one that is an interesting and answerable question.</p> <p>-Students will locate scholarly, timely evidence through independent research</p> <p>-Students will demonstrate the ability to research a problem effectively and show evidence of a potential solution or develop a problem is to be solved</p> <p>-Students will be able to craft questions and hold an interview to learn new information with a person they do not know</p> <p>-Students will be able to</p>	
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	<p>problems. Understand and explain divergent viewpoints on complex issues, critically assess the support available for each, and defend one's own judgements.</p>			<p>engage in independent research: engage opposing/contradictory ideologies in written analysis</p> <p>-Students will demonstrate they can apply at least two interdisciplinary lenses to define, explore, and analyze a question, problem, or issue—and propose a solution or a new way of seeing or understanding the question, problem, or issue.</p> <p>-Students will be able to identify, analyze, and evaluate arguments and alternative points of view, and provide justification based on a clear understanding of key evidence.</p> <p>-Students will apply scholarly articles to assigned readings to articulate mode of inquiry of articles.</p> <p>-Students will create a</p>	
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					comprehensive, accurate bibliography.	
Expression & Dialogue	<p><b>Expression:</b> Communicate clearly and effectively in both oral and written forms. Adapt messages to various audiences using appropriate media, convention, or styles. Create symbols of meaning in a variety of expressive media, both verbal and non verbal. Interaction</p>	<p>-Students should confidently answer the questions: Who am I? Where am I from? -Students communicate uniquely and clearly with orderly thinking, complexity of thought, and an accurate analysis of one's learning strategies and skills. -Students are introduced to, and begin to practice, critical habits, that include active reflection on one's own learning, best strategies for</p>	<p>-Students will understand and practice academic writing -Students will learn how to synthesize information ideas into arguments. -Students will learn ways to communicate with/to multiple audiences -Students will continue to develop proficiency as a writer, recognizing conventions of different disciplines. -Students will be able to combine multiple drafts and peer review processes learned in FYEP to craft and present questions, arguments, and ideas. -Students will be able to respond reflectively</p>	<p>-Students will successfully complete a group project and provide a self reflection of methods and community involvement. -Students will be able to articulate the complexity of critical inquiry within particular contexts. -Students will successfully prepare and present a public presentation for public feedback. -Be able to present and discuss ideas and arguments -Students will demonstrate the ability to show multiple approaches to ideas</p>		



		<p>effective learning, and an opportunity to make connections, ask questions based on one's learning and thinking (metacognition and reflection).</p> <p>-Students can move from larger topics and ideas to one that can be explored, analyzed, and researched—resulting in a 15-20 page document and a 25-30 minute presentation with visuals</p>	<p>through writing to two different perspectives / arguments around one theme.</p> <p>-Students will engage in group conversations applied to solving problems appropriate to the disciplines.</p> <p>-Students will apply the concept of academic dialogue in group discussion.</p> <p>-Students will engage with and employ appropriately multiple approaches to more than one mode of self-expression and communication</p> <p>-Students will engage in active self-reflection about their own learning and effective ways of learning,</p> <p>-Students will continue to practice presentation/public speaking; an oral presentation of a scholarly article not</p>	<p>(e.g., visual vs. paper).</p> <p>-Students will demonstrate analysis and interpretation beyond “reporting previous studies”</p> <p>-Students will acknowledge and apply multiple perspectives</p> <p>-Students will articulate knowledge to a scholarly community (write in a particular disciplinary style)</p> <p>-Students will articulate knowledge to an organization/institution outside of academia (write in a professional style discourse)</p> <p>-Students will articulate knowledge to a public (write in an accessible, open style)</p> <p>-Students will successfully prepare and deliver an oral presentation geared to a broad audience</p> <p>-Students will facilitate a group discussion of</p>	
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			discussed in class previously.	contemporary topics that can be approached from multiple perspectives -Students will successfully complete a written expression-formal paper demonstrating ability to use primary literature and synthesize; -COMPOSE an argument with supporting details; INTEGRATION, knowing audience, communicating the message effectively to that audience; ENGAGE in facilitating responses to questions; REFLECTION on strengths, challenges, next steps; metacognitive understanding	
<i>Citizenship &amp; Community</i>	Interaction with Others: Work creatively to identify and clarify issues of concern. Acknowledge	Students are introduced to the variety of ways that one participates in a community, and why this is valued at PLU.	-Students will show experience in a cultural immersion and articulate the experience -Students should gain understanding on a contemporary conflict	-Students will engage effectively with diversity of others -Students will be able to successfully reflect on one's place in the world, and understand others'	

	<p>and respond to conflicting ideas and principles, and identify common interests where possible. Develop and promote effective strategies and interpersonal relationships for implementing cooperative actions.</p> <p><b>Valuing:</b> Articulate and critically assess one's own values, with an awareness of the communities and traditions that have helped to shape them. Recognize how others have arrived at values</p>	<p>Students have at least one kind of "community experience" during their first year.</p>	<p>and articulate the viewpoints of both/all sides</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students reflect on issues/topics as it relates to self/PLU/and the greater community</li> <li>-Explore the ethics of community engagement</li> <li>-Articulate the critical analysis of citizenship</li> <li>-Work collaboratively in teams effectively</li> <li>-Engage in a community unlike one's own and reflect on the experience in terms of DJS</li> <li>-Students are exposed to different concepts of citizenship in relationship to diverse communities.</li> <li>-Reflect/connect to course/self/General education</li> <li>-Engage with other students in joint projects that benefit specific communities within and beyond PLU</li> <li>-Understand the responsibilities of</li> </ul>	<p>places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students will have an understanding of the mission as it applies to the learning context</li> <li>-Students will be able to provide critical analysis of the concept of citizenship</li> <li>-Students from a variety of majors and backgrounds will be able to work as a team to understand and find solutions to problems and issues surrounding our communities</li> <li>-Students will be able to apply research to community need with a focus on DJS</li> <li>-Students will be able to connect scholarly learning to a local/global issue</li> <li>-Students will be able to bring research to a community forum; group event based on community service; individual event based</li> </ul>	
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	<p>different from one's own, and consider their views charitably and with an appreciation for the context in which they emerged.</p> <p>Develop a habit of caring for oneself, for others, and for the environment.</p> <p>Approach moral, spiritual, and intellectual development as a life-long process of making informed choices in one's commitments.</p> <p>Approach one's commitments with a high level of personal responsibility</p>		<p>informed citizens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Understand broader implications of a discipline beyond the courses taken, what the ideas mean for society</li> <li>-See and understand the mission of the university articulated into course texts/materials/disciplines</li> <li>-Identify (or learn to identify) partnerships and collaborators linked to scholarly pursuits</li> </ul>	<p>on community service</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Students will understand the process of making institutional change</li> <li>-Students will connect knowledge from the academic setting to civic engagement</li> <li>-Students will be able to reflect on one's attitudes and beliefs and tailor communication effectively to respectfully establish relationships</li> <li>-Students will be able to demonstrate the value of a final project as based on dialogue with the community being addressed.</li> <li>-Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to understand DJS in terms of problems; and are able to distinguish and address community concerns</li> <li>-Students are able to discern and discuss</li> </ul>	
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	<p>and professional accountability.</p> <p><b>Multiple Frameworks:</b></p> <p>Recognize and understand how cultures profoundly shape different assumptions and behaviors.</p> <p>Identify issues and problems facing people in every culture (including one's own), seeking constructive strategies for addressing them.</p> <p>Cultivate respect for diverse cultures, practices, and traditions.</p>			<p>societal significance/implications of some contemporary topics</p>	
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General Comments		<p>-These courses are at an introductory level</p> <p>-Assignments are more structured, and scaffolded.</p> <p>-Courses are thematic</p> <p>-Courses are project-based, to a certain extent</p> <p>-Broaden knowledge to also include "doing"</p> <p>-Methods of inquiry: deductive vs. inductive</p> <p>-190s are more about the next link to the middle, with the culminating seminar in mind—setting the stage</p>	<p>-These courses would be thematic—through how a discipline may engage in this theme.</p> <p>-Students would need to take one course from each Division or School</p>	<p>-Should be interdisciplinary: 1) team taught, 2) mixed majors, 3) interdisciplinary</p> <p>-A course could meet the course outcomes through multiple designs</p> <p>-Portfolios used to document learning (from first year)</p>	
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