

# **General Education Task Force**

## **Quantitative Summary of Survey Comments and Student Focus Group Comments**

### **Overview**

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This assessment of the perceptions of Missouri State University faculty and students was conducted during the spring of 2011 at the request of the General Education Task Force. The survey project consisted of 3 related studies: 1) an online Likert scale survey of faculty with several additional open-ended questions, 2) a similar online Likert scale survey of students with several open-ended questions, and 3) focus group interviews with students using a questionnaire protocol. All surveys and protocols were developed by members of the Task Force. The general purpose of the surveys was to gather information concerning the perceived content, structure, and satisfaction of the general education program at MSU.

### **Methodology**

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Online surveys with faculty and students plus selective focus groups with students were conducted in Spring 2011. Approximately 340 faculty members responded to the survey, with 147-164 of them providing answers on the three open-ended questions. Approximately 1184 students responded to the survey, with specific input from 529-576 students to the three open-ended answers. Three focus groups were conducted with students with a total of 14 participants. The open-ended questions from both online surveys were analyzed for perceptions and themes concerning the general education program. This analysis identified strengths, weakness, and ways to improve the general education program identified by the respondents. The qualitative data responses were first individually coded and themes identified by an individual or pair of members from the Task Force. Next, data were analyzed by a team of three faculty members and one student according to the codes and themes. Some adjustments were made to the codes and themes during the process. A final coding review took place with all four data analysis team members to ensure inter-rater reliability. Frequency counts and percentages based on the number of responses obtained were calculated to present a quantitative analysis of the qualitative data. A summary report was prepared and approved by the Task Force. The following tables represent the quantitative analysis of the comments reported on the surveys and in the student focus groups.

## Faculty Survey Responses

### Quantitative Picture of Comments

<b>Possible Gen Ed Program Goals (Item #6: n=78)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1. World/Cultural Knowledge	3	4%
a. Philosophy	2	2.5%
b. Political Systems	3	4%
c. History	2	2.5%
d. Literature & Fine Arts	9	11.5%
e. Foreign Language	7	9%
2. Physical Activity & Health	6	8%
3. Science of Natural World	3	4%
a. Sustainability	3	4%
4. Basic Skills	1	1%
a. Oral Communication	1	1%
b. Written Communication	2	2.5%
c. Reading	2	2.5%
d. Listening Skills	3	4%
e. Math	3	4%
f. Personal Finance	1	1%
5. Proficiency in research skills, information literacy, and critical thinking	7	9%
6. Ability to integrate knowledge and apply to everyday life; understand connections between disciplines	9	11.5%
7. Personal Development	8	10%
a. Decision-making Abilities	2	2.5%
b. Professionalism	1	1%
c. Responsibility, Respect and Self Awareness	2	2.5%
d. Leadership and Ability to Deal With Conflict	2	2.5%
e. Moral Reasoning, Ethics, & Social Justice	2	2.5%

<b>Strengths/Advantages of Current Program (Item #8: n=200)</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1. Variety of Courses Offered (Choice)	55	27.5%
a. Flexibility and Choice for Students	2	1%
b. Shared Experience	1	.5%
c. Diverse exposure to ideas/concepts	1	.5%
2. Broad & Traditional Liberal Arts Perspectives; Sound gen ed goals – general knowledge goals/outcomes; Traditional core disciplines; Breadth	76	38%
a. Science, Math, Writing, Humanities, Social Sciences	1	.5%
3. Public Affairs & Mission Emphasis; supports Mission and PA; Expands world view (cultural competency); community engagement	15	7.5%
4. Faculty	18	9%
a. Strong oversight by faculty	2	1%
b. Quality and dedicated faculty; variety of faculty	2	1%

5. Develops Educated Person	19	9.5%
a. Covers basic courses needed for educated person	1	.5%
b. Engaged citizen focus	1	.5%
c. Prepares for future work (job) and society	1	.5%
6. Basic Skills; In content areas; Prepares for upper division coursework; learning communities	30	15%
a. Communication, writing, computer and critical thinking skills; writing and fundamentals	1	.5%
7. Value to Students	2	1%
a. Transfer and articulation agreements – strong	2	1%
b. Value	1	.5%

<b>Weaknesses of Current Program (Item #9: n=241)</b>		
1. Overall Curricular Design	2	<1%
a. Mission: Forced: Lacking; Unclear	27	11%
b. Not innovative or unique	9	4%
c. Too many courses; too many credit hours, limiting upper division electives	15	6%
d. Incoherent or illogical system	26	11%
e. Not flexible enough; not enough waivers/exceptions	7	3%
f. Politics: Imbalance of courses per dept; competition	11	4.5%
g. Not competitively priced	1	<1%
h. Relevance & practicality missing	16	6%
2. Lacking Specific Content Area or Modality	3	1%
a. Development in major/minor	11	4.5%
b. Critical thinking, writing, science & math	1	<1%
c. Computer & information literacy	9	4%
d. Foreign language	7	3%
e. Policies – foreign & domestic	2	<1%
f. Urban or international study abroad	2	<1%
g. Diversity, intercultural understanding, etc.	8	3%
h. Ethical leadership	4	2%
i. Online	2	<1%
j. Humanities	5	2%
k. Financial literacy/business	8	3%
l. Application/integration of knowledge	1	<1%
3. Classes		
a. Standards – too easy; redundant with high school	35	14.5%
b. Too difficult for non-majors, esp. 100-level	1	<1%
c. Little pragmatic value	6	2%
d. Too many choices in natural sciences	6	2%
e. Size – too large	12	5%
f. Course drift – content & standards	10	4%
4. Teaching/Faculty	6	2%

a. Jr & per course faculty	10	4%
b. Faculty don't understand goals	7	3%
c. Not innovative or current	7	3%
5. Students		
a. Don't understand value & connection to degree programs	18	7%
b. Don't want to be there	8	3%
c. Expect high grade for little work	8	3%
6. Other	1	<1%

<b>Improvements to Gen Ed (item #10: 228)</b>		
1. No changes	8	3.5%
2. Improve/change the review/oversight (CGEIP, Central Admin, BOG, evaluation of courses & teachers, budgetary items)	26	11%
3. Classes		
a. Reduce size per section	13	6%
b. Increase academic rigor	23	10%
c. Increase real-world applications	37	16%
d. Reduce course drift	2	<1%
4. Curriculum/Overall System		
a. Offer remedial skills to underprepared	8	3.5%
b. Decrease options; reduce specific courses	5	2%
c. Increase options or flexibility; add specific topic	27	12%
d. Increase interdisciplinary or linked courses	17	7%
e. Focus on basics: reading, writing, math, critical thinking	1	<1%
f. Trim liberal arts	2	<1%
g. Increase options for upper division & courses in majors	7	7%
h. Increase emphasis on mission	22	9.5%
5. Students		
a. Improve admitted students	5	2%
b. Improve students expectations of Gen Ed	23	10%
6. Instructors	2	<1%
a. improved attitude toward/understanding of gen ed	17	7%
b. Improve quality	9	4%