

Fall 2023 Gen Ed Reform Progress Report

Timeline:

- TILting Gen Ed model presented at opening week All Faculty Meeting
- Four feedback sessions hosted early in the quarter
- Establishment of an ongoing Gen Ed Steering Committee

Our Gen Ed Steering Committee has met five times and drawn the participation of a steady core of a dozen or so faculty with perhaps a dozen more occasional participants. This group initially functioned as a study group where we've examined a few models of Gen Ed and explored assorted possible avenues for BC in addition to developing a good working understanding of the TILT Gen Ed model from the AAC&U group. In our latest meetings we have turned our attention to next steps at BC, specific asks of administration, articulating feedback from faculty, looking into avenues for engaging faculty in understanding the issues, exploring opportunities, and recognizing hazards in reforming our approach to Gen Ed.

We had about 15 minutes or so with a large group of faculty in Fall Quarter. This was about enough time to present the TILT model worked up by the AAC&U team last spring. It was not enough time to discuss that model in any detail or to discuss the considerations that led us to this model. Some faculty were left with the impression that we'd simply developed a new program of Gen Ed without faculty input or conversation. Nothing, however, is settled until faculty vote on a new plan. The TILT model as presented in opening week is far from a developed proposal for a program of Gen Ed. The model we presented mainly outlined an institutional structure for collaboration in developing, implementing and adaptively administering a new Gen Ed program. We also presented a few options for how it might be developed. A great deal of work remains to be done even assuming we want to go with some version of the TILT model.

We had attendance of over a dozen faculty at the first three of our feedback sessions. It became clear over the course of these sessions that faculty have not had enough time to fully process what we are trying to do and why. Some don't yet appreciate why we are pursuing Gen Ed reform, or why we need a Gen Ed program at all.

At this point, the vast majority of faculty remain at the base of a learning curve that is required for making informed decisions about how to proceed with Gen Ed reform. A relatively small group of engaged faculty have made great progress in the Gen Ed steering committee. However, we will require significantly more time in large and medium sized meetings to engage faculty in the Gen Ed reform conversation before we can proceed. Faculty buy in can only be informed and deliberate once we've been afforded the space together to explore and process.

The User Experience

While faculty engaged in Gen Ed reform have focused on the dynamics of Gen Ed models, faculty generally may be more interested in what Gen Ed reform will mean for their workload and classes. So, the steering committee is turning more attention to explaining what Gen Ed reform will mean for faculty in practice. That is, we need to pay more attention to the end user experience. What will faculty need to do to implement Gen Ed reform and what will it look like to maintain our Gen Ed program, assess student learning and learn from assessment ourselves.

We do hope to eliminate redundant assessment responsibilities for Prof Tech programs. Assessing Gen Ed outcomes need not be the responsibility of Prof Tech programs. However, Gen Ed should serve the interests of

Prof Tech programs and students and their eventual employers as well as transfer students. So, Prof Tech faculty have good reason to participate in Gen Ed reform even if their assessment responsibilities are ultimately curtailed.

Moving away from 18 Gen Ed outcomes indiscriminately infused will unavoidably involve re-rating courses. But it has become clear that there is no way to make Gen Ed at BC meaningful to students or assessable by faculty without taking this step. So, re-rating courses is baked into any successful Gen Ed reform. Beyond this, the faculty experience depends on a number of factors we still need to sort through.

A smaller number of outcomes more narrowly infused should significantly lighten assessment responsibilities for many of our classes. And it should make assessment more meaningful for those that do claim robust instruction in our Gen Eds. We have well established assessment methods we can stick with. But making new Gen Ed outcomes meaningful and assessable will require thoughtful reworking of rubrics. However involved the discussion of models may seem, making assessment more meaningful and less burdensome are key desiderata for Gen Ed reform.

Next Steps

We will next work on developing a multimedia road show for division meetings, and, hopefully, for a substantial session on a college issues or a professional development day. Our primary challenge at this point is reaching faculty. Meetings we call, emails, and brief documents are not effective means of reaching larger numbers of faculty. We will require substantial blocks of dedicated time at college wide meetings to engage faculty in the sorts of conversations needed to make informed choices and build consensus. In the meantime, we will work to prepare engaging ways to inform faculty and offer structured ways to participate and contribute their voice to the reform effort.

Asks of Faculty

Full-time faculty are contractually obligated to participate in General Education. Participating in Gen Ed reform is an avenue for fulfilling governance obligations for part time faculty. We anticipate that the Office of Academic Affairs to make funds available for part time faculty work on Gen Ed that exceeds contractual governance expectations, just as they have for assessment work for adjuncts. Work on Gen Ed has largely taken the form of doing assessment in previous years. As we take on Gen Ed reform, this obligation shifts to participating collaboratively in designing and implementing a new program of General Education. So, we ask that faculty do the following:

- study our small collection of brief working documents
- work to understand the opportunities and hazards we may encounter in Gen Ed reform
- provide clear, productive, actionable feedback
- participate in designing and implementing a program of General Education that can serve our students effectively

Asks of Administration

Administration has been supportive in various ways. More is needed.

- We need significant blocks of time in large meetings of faculty. Half of a college issues day could be used very productively.

- We ask for significant time in division meetings. We will work with deans to organize this.
- Gen Ed reform requires more financial support at the college level. So far, this year, the Colleges' investment in Gen Ed reform has been limited to release time for Russ. A further release for a co-lead organizer would be of real benefit.
- Faculty stipends for other vital functions in our Gen Ed reform effort should be funded, including research and production of media, graphics, and presentations.
- We have paid adjuncts for assessment work that goes beyond their contractual governance obligations. We'd like to redirect this money to funding adjuncts interested in working on Gen Ed reform.