AAC&U General Education and Assessment 3.0: Next-Level Practices Now

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Institutional Leadership and General Education Reform: Strategies and Structures to Enhance Effectiveness

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General Education Reform Expected

- Regular part of higher education landscape

- Been discussed, studied and discussed for the past 15 years

- AAC&U's conference as evidence

- Search "general education" in Amazon – more than 91,000 entries

- We are familiar with the terrain – and if you are not, you should be

General Education Part of Regional Accreditation

- ## Middle States Standard 12
  The institution's curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

- ## WASC GE outcomes
  The list of outcomes is reasonable and appropriate. Outcomes describe how students can demonstrate their learning. Faculty have agreed on explicit criteria, such as rubrics, for assessing students' level of mastery and have identified exemplars of student performance at varying levels for each outcome.

NEASC – General Education – Standard 4

- 4.15 The general education requirement is coherent and substantive. It embodies the institution's definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they will live. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation, including the assessment of what students learn.

- 4.16 The general education requirement in each undergraduate program ensures adequate breadth for all degree-seeking students by showing a balanced regard for what are traditionally referred to as the arts and humanities, the sciences including mathematics, and the social sciences. General education requirements include offerings that focus on the subject matter and methodologies of these three primary domains of knowledge as well as on their relationships to one another.

- 4.17 The institution ensures that all undergraduate students complete at least the equivalent of forty semester hours in a bachelor's degree program, or the equivalent of twenty semester hours in an associate's degree program in general education.

- 4.18 Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning, including the skills of information literacy. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind.

North Central Association

- The organization integrates general education into all of its undergraduate degree programs through curricular and experiential offerings intentionally created to develop the attitudes and skills requisite for a life of learning in a diverse society.

- The organization regularly reviews the relationship between its mission and values and the effectiveness of its general education.

Northwest Commissions

- The General Education component of undergraduate programs (if offered) demonstrates an integrated course of study that helps students develop the breadth and depth of intellect to become more effective learners and to prepare them for a productive life of work, citizenship, and personal fulfillment. Baccalaureate degree programs and transfer associate degree programs include a recognizable core of general education that represents an integration of basic knowledge and methodology of the humanities and fine arts, mathematical and natural sciences, and social sciences. Applied undergraduate degree and certificate programs of thirty (30) semester credits or forty-five (45) quarter credits in length contain a recognizable core of related instruction or general education with identifiable outcomes in the areas of communication, computation, and human relations that align with and support program goals and intended outcomes.

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Successful General Education Programs Must

Define themselves and their scope
Align with mission
Be assessable
Be a component in the undergraduate program – not the entire program

Everyone Does Gen Ed Reform

- Witnessed it from at distance at NYU (MAP program)
- Facilitated it at Baruch College, CUNY
  - Common Core
- Participated in it at Hunter College, CUNY
  - Mellon funds for Task Force
- Making it happen at Curry College – as CAO

General Education is Not Easy for Higher Education

- Rarely happens spontaneously

- Vacant Lot

- Challenges our internal structures & priorities

- High stakes for faculty

Effective Academic Leadership

Sets Expectations

Manages challenges

Empowers those with expertise – faculty

Uses tensions to effect change

If Higher Education were run as a business

Underlying principles clear to all (profit)

Changes through projects

Outcomes clearly understood and set

Successful business organizations all about change

Higher Education is <u>Not</u> a Business

Different values

Strength from tradition

Process by which decisions are made often as important at the decision itself

Leadership must work collaboratively

Business's study of change to help within higher educational - Project Management

Planning, managing and organizing resources to complete a discrete project

Projects have beginnings, middles and ends

Constrained by time, budget and scope

Origins in engineering

Project Management Basics

Systematic approach to -

Defining

Organizing

Planning & Monitoring

Controlling (cost, time, impact, etc.)

Closing

Project Management is a professional discipline

Extremely complex – many different flavors

But - concepts similar throughout

Projects demand leadership – project manager

Projects call for teams – participation above and apart from every day

Project Management

Project Manager focuses on three big picture issues:

Time

Cost

Quality

Relationship between three

Project Management in a bit more detail:

Scope of project – can it be stated clearly?

Expectations – what do different stakeholders expect?

Charter – are rules understood?

Deliverables – what is accomplished?

Assets – what can be brought to bear on project?

Project Management

Plan next level down

Necessary to be clear about scope and definitions

Pay close attention to **Work Breakdown Structure**

Discrete chunk of work

Extremely useful when thinking of general education reform

General Education reform as a "business" project

Rough fit at best

Inherent tension in agreement on:

Stakeholders

Leadership

Outcomes

Appreciation of it as a project to be managed, however, can help with process, decision-making and outcomes

As stated before . . .

General Education **essential** to accreditation

Agencies demand it

Public does not understand it

Low public return on investment but high stakes

Has to be managed effectively

Project Management models useful for academic leaders and IHEs

Helps to see bigger picture

Organizes effort

Can convey how change happens in ways that are more understandable to external stakeholders

Goal – more effective general education reform

Precepts and tensions in higher education

Faculty investment and control of the curriculum is paramount

But general education reform needs academic administrative leadership

Accreditation demands specific general education outcomes

But each institution has to chart its own path

Academic administrative leadership's priorities are the integrity of the process and its larger institutional impact

General Education reform is a special kind of project

- Requires direction and management – but it cannot be controlled

- Ultimate success rests with faculty

- Ultimate failure rests with Provost/Dean

Picture General Education Reform as a very big project – but unusual

One official/unofficial PM – provost/dean – who cannot manage directly

One official/unofficial PM – the faculty who work on it – who cannot control the big picture

Administrative Leadership	Faculty
Can define scope	Can define general education
Knowledge and contact with all stakeholders	Knowledge of disciplines and what works with students
Cannot impose ideas	Does not command resources
Needs faculty	Needs external guidance

From the perspective of the academic leader (provost, chief academic officer or dean), the fundamental steps of project management in general education reform are . . .

Initiation, Project Planning, Development, Execution, Evaluation (and ending)

Critical components:

- Pre-planning

- Charge

- Touchpoints/Ending

Understanding the big picture

Initiation

Determining that general education reform is needed – **what** are the key factors leading to this?

Clarify reasons for why things are the way they are

Establish needs and demands

Needs provide initial goals of the project

Project planning

Deciding how best to proceed at your institution - **how** will general education reform take place?

Stakeholder analysis: what is required? What is desired? What is possible? By whom?

Development

Working with faculty to develop something new – **What** will the new gen ed look like? **Who** will lead the effort?

- Hands off leadership

  ➔ What are your institution's shibboleths?

  ➔ Multiple identities for faculty

  ➔ Aim for process and buy-in, not a silver bullet

  ➔ Lower expectations/raise expectations

- Hands on leadership

Execution

Seeing the project take place in phases:

- Securing faculty buy-in

- Formal approval

- Implementation

- Concerns

  → Costs/benefits of pilots & modeling

  → Institutional fatigue

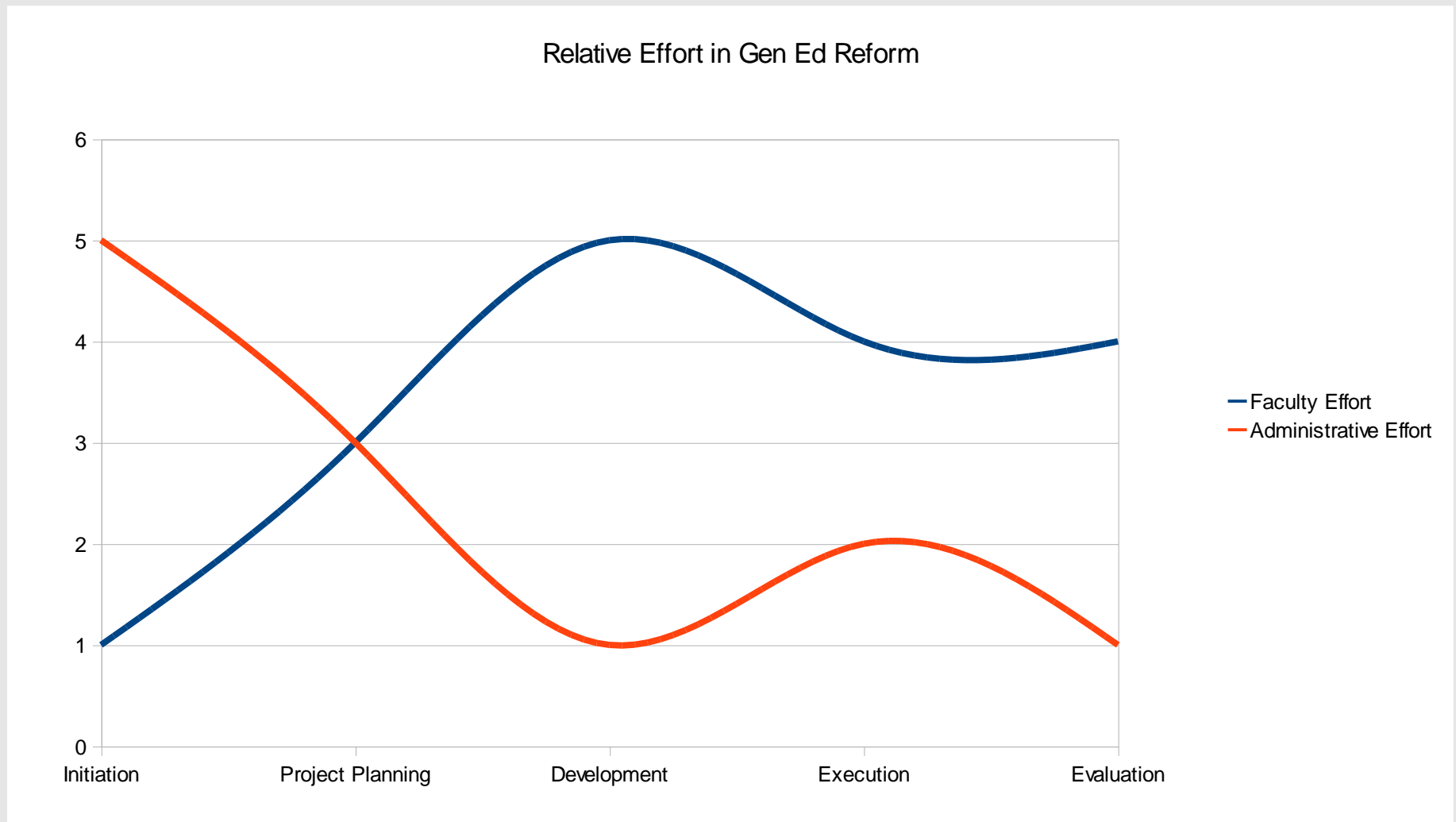 → Ongoing monitoring of expectations

Evaluation

Structures to keep general education alive – what ends will it achieve?

Different goals and outcomes for different stakeholders

Ideal goal vs. stretch goal vs. acceptable end

How to think about ending the project

Overview of how the work plays out

Relative Effort in Gen Ed Reform

— Faculty Effort
— Administrative Effort

Initiation · Project Planning · Development · Execution · Evaluation

Effective academic leadership recognizes this pattern

- Front load much of the work and attention

- Manage loosely, preferably through delegates

- Be ready to re-engage to keep project moving along

- Give credit to everyone else

Pre-Planning and Initiation

Extensive "WHY" analysis

- Why change general education?
- Needs simple answer that can be found by others
- External pressures very important (reaccreditation)
- Can only emerge when agreed to by faculty leadership
- Improvement is not a sufficient reason

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Pre-Planning and Initiation

Extensive "WHAT" consideration

What is goal?

- Institutional success in a measurable way

- Individual/idiosyncratic successes

- Accreditation

- Develop ideal, stretch, reasonable and lowest bar goals

Pre-Planning and Initiation

Extensive "WHO" investigation

- Who will lead? And why?

- Who will participate? And why?

- Stakeholder analysis

Pre-Planning and Initiation

- What might committee/structure to change this look like?

- What was prior reform?

- What else is going on that might help/hinder process?

- What are local third-rails/shibboleths?

- What does a walk all the way through the process look like?

Further Early Planning

Consider the Plan

- Costs

    ➔ Money

    ➔ Time

    ➔ Political Capital

    ➔ ROI

- Communication Strategy – short term and long term

- Scheduling – build out calendar

- Risk Identification/Analysis

How To Make It Work

Built in mechanisms for ongoing awareness of development and execution

- More indirect, the better

- More reliable, the better

- Distance – let faculty go – process needs space and trust

Before the Charge

Answers needed for why, what, who, when and how <u>before</u> drafting charge

Institutions will only go as far as the faculty want to go

Faculty collaboration central throughout framing

Charges Matter

Formal charge – written and re-written

- Well-crafted charge anticipates questions and concerns

- Should address mechanism for decision-making

- Is clear about constraints (scope, time, money, quality)

- Sets expectations for bringing a project to conclusion

Well-Written Charges

- Anticipate issues

- Culture/context specific

- Shape entire enterprise

Charges should be shared, considered and reconsidered

Public understanding through charge

Sample Charge – How Might It Be Strengthened?

Review literature, including our own evidence, on general education.

Collect input and ideas from the campus on the outcomes that students need to achieve in general education.

Propose a structure by which to achieve those outcomes.

Develop a plan to assess the effectiveness of the new structure.

Once Work Underway

Administrative leadership should

- Support, support, support

- Distance as much as possible

- Plan touch points in advance – mutually beneficial

- If possible, look for alternative communication

Shared goal – approved and improved general education

Final Steps

Bringing the project to closure

- Circle back to stretch and attainable goals

- Credit everywhere else – should be owned by community (lot is filled)

- Look to make rehabilitation and change an ongoing part of process