Engaging the University Community

Building a Comprehensive General Education Program and First Year Experience

Colleen M. Sexton, Ph.D.
Deborah E. Bordelon, Ph.D.
Governors State University
OVERVIEW OF GOVERNORS STATE UNIVERSITY

Founded in 1969 as an upper division university
Currently offers 28 Bachelor’s degree programs; 28 Master’s degree programs; 5 Doctoral programs, and 23 Certificate programs
Admitting our first freshmen class in fall 2014
Evolving from a commuter institution to residential in fall 2014
Conceptual Framework

- Liberal Education and America’s Promise - LEAP, the movement works with colleges, universities and community colleges that enroll large numbers of minority and first-generation students, as well as with schools that have a strong liberal arts tradition.

- Focus on Writing across the curriculum
Essential Learning Outcomes

• Provide the guiding vision and national benchmarks for college learning and liberal education in the 21st century
Development of General Education Curriculum

General Education Task Force

Faculty Senate and Administration appointed members;

Comprised of 10 to 15 members, including two per academic college, one from University Library, and two or more Provost appointees;

Started work in December 2011 by meeting twice a month during the academic year to investigate best practices and consider their implementation.
The charge was to investigate best practices for general education and make recommendations for GSU general education requirements, in consultation with the appropriate Senate standing committees and other university committees.

Members reviewed research reports, read websites and reports from other institutions, discussed general education with colleagues at other institutions, and attended national conferences.

Completed Student Learning Outcomes for General Education with input from the Committee on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (CASLO) and Faculty Senate.
Development of General Education Curriculum

Lower Division Steering Committee

Operational campus-wide committee focused on implementing admission of first year students;
Also focused on significant changes that included Housing, Health needs of students, and development of Athletics;
Chaired by Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences;
Membership: General Education Task Force Chair; representatives from Admissions, Marketing, Housing, Registrar and Financial Aid, and Student Affairs.
High-Impact Educational Practices
• Help students achieve essential learning outcomes
HIP at GSU

Identified three cohort themes:
- Civic Engagement
- Sustainability
- Global Citizenship

Created course sequences for each of the three themes for the Fall and Spring Semesters of the student’s first year and Fall Semester of the second year;

Developed a robust First Year Seminar course that meets the IAI requirements for interdisciplinary humanities AND includes a peer mentoring program using upper division students;

Supported development of new courses in IAI format to meet state wide deadlines.
Developed guidelines for other general education courses:

Sophomore year - Career Explorations elective

Junior year - Seminar course within the major to integrate transfer students

Senior year - Capstone designed as an integrative experience
Freshmen will follow a set schedule that ensures they obtain 15 credits per semester; be able to work on campus as much as possible, and be taught by new and veteran full-time professors rather than by part-time or adjunct professors.

Freshmen classes will be limited to no more than 30 students, except for freshmen composition class, which will be limited to 15 students.
HIP at GSU

Integrative seminars taught by faculty selected via competitive application.

Assessment of learning outcomes using VALUE - Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education – system.
Inclusive Excellence

- Ensure that every student gets the benefits of an engaged and practical liberal education.
Student Affairs as a partner in Student Learning

Division reorganized as part of Academic Affairs;
Adopted principles of “Student Learning Imperative” document by ACPA and NASPA;
Established learning focused mission and vision, rather than previously existing “student services” model;
Introduced learning outcomes assessment at departmental level and mapped to divisional learning outcomes focused on: student success, self-efficacy and determination, multicultural competence, leadership and civic engagement.
Professional Development Symposia

Feb 2012 – LEAP Webinar

March 2012 – Campus wide symposium on Liberal Education and Planning for the Freshmen Experience

Discussions on:
  – Essential Learning Outcomes
  – High Impact Practices
  – Themes

Dr. Carol Geary Schneider
Professional Development Symposia

October 2012

Betsy Barefoot and John Gardner
From the John N. Gardner Institute for Excellence in Undergraduate Education

“The Essentials of First-Year Student Success: Planning for 2014”

Day-long symposia on planning for the freshmen experience – discussion on topics from Your College Experience: Strategies for Success
Professional Development Symposia

March 2013

Dean of The University of Texas School of Public Health

Known for TED talk on Innovative Thinking

Discussion on:

Teaching Students to Think Through College
Innovation Generation

Ripple effect created across campus by her presentation that promoted innovative thinking, looking outside existing frames of reference and traditional expectations.

Dr. Roberta Ness
Professional Development Symposia

October 2013
Professor of English at University of California, Berkeley;
Led GSU faculty and staff in a series of activities addressing Writing Across the Curriculum – one of the AAC&U High Impact Practices;
Faculty and staff worked together on understanding the power and complexity of the writing process; the specifics of incorporating writing into syllabi; and for staff they worked on the writing tasks that are part of their everyday work;
Returned February 2014 to continue the discussion.

Dr. Don McQuade
Professional Development Symposia

April 2014

NCTE Past President, Florida State University

She leads the Inter/National Coalition for Electronic Portfolio Research

Facilitated ePortfolio conversations, explaining what they are, ways to begin developing, using, and scoring them.

Dr. Kathleen Yancey
Authentic Assessments

- Determine whether students can apply learning to complex problems and real-world challenges
Beginning Fall 2014

Implementation of Assessment Plan at multiple levels:
University
College
Program
Course

Assessments designed to determine the extent to which learning outcomes are met through the implementation of High Impact Practices
Lessons Learned to Date

Strategies to engage campus community in development of general education and first year experiences;

Strategies to engage academic affairs and student affairs in developing holistic learning experience for all students, especially first year students;

Modifications of student learning outcomes to address specific regional and thematic needs;

Active learning strategies to generate discussion;

Identification and embracement of the challenges presented in providing a liberal education to today’s undergraduate students.
Questions?

Deborah E. Bordelon, Ph.D., Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs at Governors State University, dbordelon@govst.edu

Colleen M. Sexton, Ph.D., Associate Provost and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs at Governors State University, csexton@govst.edu