

FINAL REPORT

“Assessing Trends in the Liberal Arts Core: A Vision for the 21st Century”

The American Academy for Liberal Education
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A. Information for FIPSE

The focus of our work, as described below, was on providing vital assistance to individual campuses as they worked to understand and improve their general education programs.

Of particular note, the consultative advice and assistance we provided ... was more akin to an anthropological field study, providing information that enabled each participating institution to develop a more accurate and introspective account of its own recent curriculum history, framed against the backdrop of national benchmarks in general education experimentation that would have otherwise taken the institutions years of effort and substantial financial resources to obtain... We worked as facilitators during site visits in helping gen ed faculty to resolve disputes and settle issues of substance and policy by both listening to their accounts, and providing comments and reflections that situated their concerns or disagreements in wider historical and cultural settings that might provide new insights on a solution, or “knock the sharp edges off” prickly matters of contention... Often, accounts drawn from elsewhere of similar difficulties faced and met helped a given institution’s faculty to develop the resolve to get past their own divisions and make some real progress in gen ed...

B. Project Overview

Sixty-six public and private colleges and universities were invited to collaborate with the American Academy for Liberal Education to examine the impact on general education requirements and the liberal arts core produced by the following hypothetical factors: strategic planning; learning outcomes assessment; academic downsizing; departmental and disciplinary proliferation and competition; the increase over the past three decades of professional degree programs; and the specific institutional demands imposed by specialized accreditation.

All of these factors were included in an initial survey of general education as defined in each institution’s catalogue requirements over a 20-year period. Subsequently, a sample

of 20 institutions were provided with written institutional profiles, 2-day site visits, and follow-up AALE staff consultation, in order to bring the information about their own institution as discerned in the study, set against the backdrop of national norms and trends (and specific behaviors of peer institutions throughout the country), to bear on their own ongoing efforts to strengthen and evaluate the caliber of student learning achieved in their own institution's general education program. The summative results of these efforts were disseminated to the participating institutions and featured more widely in several national program presentations. An extended monograph on the results is currently in preparation, and the project is continuing with private financing under auspices... of the Association of Core Texts and Courses (ACTC).

C. Purpose

AALE's project enabled participating institutions to gauge the value, relevance, and effectiveness of their general education requirements in comparison to overall national trends in gen ed reform, and especially in comparison to the behavior of peer institutions participating in our project. The principal goal was to make available to participating institutions reliable historical information on their own general education programs, each set against the backdrop of national norms and trends, with particular emphasis upon reliable benchmark comparisons with national peer institutions in the study. In our experience, the data base and models we developed far exceeded the usual review apparatus offered by one or more 'gen ed review committee' members of any given institution. Our intention was to develop greater reflective awareness on the part of faculty involved in teaching and supporting general education courses and programs, to enable them to determine more effectively what was working, what other, similar institutions were doing (and the difficulties they might be experiencing), and what needed strengthening in their own programs. In particular, we placed emphasis on helping the gen ed faculty or program committees to develop effective means of student learning assessment in key areas of the liberal arts, in order to provide meaningful data to the faculty in its efforts to revise and strengthen core requirements, and also to help the faculty avoid widely-observed tendencies either to ignore, or else to "over-engineer" gen ed programs in response to perceived problems that were not always accurately framed. A secondary goal was to counter the widely disseminated and widely believed (but false) view that "general education is in serious decline."

D. Background and Origins

AALE is a national accreditor of liberal arts colleges and programs, focused upon the design and quality of the common educational experience required for a degree, as embodied in core curricula and general education. Institutions seeking, or even inquiring about our accreditation often found themselves embroiled in discussions, if not controversies, over general education: should they have a "common" experience embodied in a core curriculum, or were general distribution requirements enough? Was the caliber of learning in key subject areas and competencies associated with liberal education sufficiently rigorous and demanding? Were the students actually mastering

what the courses and programs were designed to impart? Many faculties cited complaints about demands of specialized accreditors that carried off resources from undergraduate, and especially from general education; others complained about student vocationalism or the proliferation of professional and technical programs amidst the major programs offered for undergraduate degrees at their institutions.

In the midst of this, in 1995, the National Association of Scholars published a scathing report on undergraduate education, claiming that, over the past century, core liberal education requirements had eroded seriously, and all but disappeared at the nation's most prestigious institutions. Simultaneously, Department of Education research scholar Clifford Adelman released his "course map" and study of student transcripts, claiming to show just the opposite: that students, left to their own devices, tended to enroll in most of the key core courses that faculty found essential (and hence claiming that the clamor over gen ed decline was factually deficient). Rather than taking sides on this dispute, we regarded both claims as falsifiable hypotheses, whose contradictory evidence gave support to the idea that no one really, yet, had a clear and wholly encompassing picture of general education.

Accordingly, in March of 1998, the American Academy for Liberal Education submitted an application to the Comprehensive Program of the Fund for Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) in the U.S. Department of Education, *Assessing Trends in the Liberal Arts Core: A Vision for the 21st Century*. The application proposed to assemble

a nationwide consortium of colleges and universities to undertake a three-year project examining the impact of strategic planning, learning outcomes assessment, academic downsizing, the adding of professional degree programs, and specialized accreditation on the liberal arts core curriculum. [AALE's] FIPSE project [would] enable institutions to gauge the value, relevance and effectiveness of their liberal arts core requirements, and to assess the role of professional accreditation in achieving or failing to achieve their institutional missions and goals. (AALE Grant Application; Abstract of proposal.)

In its conception and implementation, this project directly responded to a call by FIPSE for renewed work on general education reforms. Our project aimed to discern the forces at work to transform general education during the final 20 years of the twentieth century, treating (as mentioned above) all the prior competing hypotheses as working hypotheses, subject to revision, reinterpretation, or refutation.

Most importantly, we wanted colleges and universities to have command over their own institutional histories for the purpose of making informed decisions about gen ed structural reform. We found that most faculties proposed formal programs, designed with some educational objectives in mind, but quickly found their intentions subverted by the habits of student course-taking that Adelman's study documented. We needed better data, and more informed planning, to help achieve the general educational objectives that faculty proposed. This FIPSE project was designed to achieve those objectives.

E. Project Description

During the first year and one-half of the project, catalog data from 66 participating institutions were collected, compiled and coded to measure the changes in size, scope, duration, and quality of general education requirements, as well as the institutions' Carnegie class, the growth of institutions, their schools and large administrative units, their respective departments, and their accrediting agencies between 1978 and 1998 at four-year post-secondary institutions.

During the second year, the project staff selected 20 institutions to contact for site visits in order to meet with institutional representatives to gather information about institutional causes of change in general, liberal education. In other words, the database was conceived as an instrument to trace statistical trends and to raise interesting hypotheses about the causes of change (or stability) in general education. With a view to representing changes in a wide variety of higher education institutions, colleges and universities were selected and asked to participate in the site-visit phase of the project.

The selection of institutions and, ultimately, the visit to their campuses afforded the opportunity to subject hypotheses raised in the data collection to further refinements. Case histories, or "institutional profiles," were written by the principal investigator for each institution that was visited. The institutional profiles represented narrative histories that documented patterns of change in the general education program of the visited institution and placed the current (1998) program into a comparative contrast of changes and structures of programs in the national database. Thus, as each change occurred in the narrative, it was possible to ask an institution why this change had occurred. Later, as experience with institutional causes of change increased, the refinements in hypotheses grew to the point where it was possible to ask if a particular cause was involved in a change, by posing questions for faculty response: for example, was the creation of a department responsible for a particular change in requirements noted in our study? Were faculty encouraged by new administrative initiatives or changes in leadership to reorganize the curriculum? Was declining enrollment in key courses or departments a factor contributing to a noticeable general education curriculum reform?

The smaller subset of targeted institutions then each received a site visit by one or both members of our project team. During the visit, an "ethnography" (a kind of anthropological field study or oral history) of general education at the institution was compiled by the principal investigator. Faculty and administrators were interviewed on the basis of the data in the database and the (previously sent) draft of their institutional profile. Faculty then often volunteered both comments on the accuracy and insights of the institutional profiles and offered corrections or additional data. For example, the development of learning communities and their attachment to general education programs has only recently, since 2000, begun to be noted in college catalogues. Yet our interviews revealed that experiments with these began on many campuses between 1994 and 1996. Frequently, in such efforts, grants and large rearrangement of institutional resources were part of a story about general education that the faculty and administration of an institution wished to make known. This, of course, is precisely the kind of essential

understanding that college catalogues, supplied by the institution, could not reveal.¹ More generally, the site visits were an opportunity to gather records on innovations in core, and to hear more detailed and authoritative accounts concerning their ongoing operations, successes, and failures.

During the third year, by design, *Assessing Trends* reached its full potential as a national model for documenting and *aiding* institutional reform. Of the 20 institutions, 12 were visited in the last year of the project. The database included 66 institutions representing the four² major Carnegie classes of four-year baccalaureate degree granting institutions. It had a “surface validity” in that it represented baccalaureate institutions in the same proportions as they were found in the national “universe” of all four-year institutions, and it had representation of private, public, religious and secular institutions in the same proportions as the national universe. And, while its representation of masters, doctoral, and research institutions were disproportional to national proportions (in order to gain sufficient representation of the research universities), it contained diverse models of general education curriculum programs which could be identified with specific classes and affiliations of institutions.

Therefore, during the last year, the project incorporated into its site visit a presentation of the emerging results of our work nationally, which we entitled “Trends in General Liberal Education.” If the database gave the current statistics about general education and the Institutional Profile focused on the past developments, then the site visit presentation focused upon future possibilities in general education more broadly in a nationwide context. Conversely, institutions that were engaged in strategic planning for their own futures were discovering that a sound liberal education, conveyed primarily through the general education program, was central to developing the distinctive character of education they offered and to positioning themselves in the educational niche to which they aspired. Consequently, while retaining a national view of structures and innovations in general education, each of our campus presentations nevertheless was capable of being tailored to the specific educational traditions and characteristics of the visited institution that might seem apt for guiding its development in new directions.

Thus, the pattern of database collection and study, institutional profile, “ethnographic” site visit and presentation with an eye to both historical review and future possibilities in general education at a given institution was maintained throughout the rest of the project’s life. Site visits were concluded in early summer of 2001. This pattern was so successful, that a second phase of the project, on a fee-for-service basis, was developed by the Association for Core Texts and Courses. The database was expanded to take into account innovations which had been discovered in the initial project (e.g., the

¹ Occasionally, the value of the accuracy of the site visits was confirmed in large scale terms. We visited one institution where, between their 1990 and 1994 catalogues sent to us, a 1991 catalogue had been published where an entire general education structure had been adopted one year and dropped the next. There had been two changes, not one between 1990 and 1994.

² Our study used the “old” Carnegie classifications, which were revised two years after our project and the selection of participating institutions (based upon the old system) had begun.

development of learning centers and enrichment programs) and openings for 36 new institutions were created in the second phase, currently underway at the time of this writing.

F (1) Project Results

Assessing Trends findings may be divided into two broad categories: (i) Statistical Trends in General Education, 1978-1998; and (ii) Causality and Innovations in General Education, 1978-2001. The latter frequently reflects data collected from the site visits.

(i) Statistical Trends in General Education, 1978-1998

A curriculum moves through time and, thus, a longitudinal study of many curricula in one institution produces a kind of cinema of curriculum -- a good imitation of what the curriculum was doing in its institutional life. Bring together sixty-six curricula, each moving over 20 years, and you not only have 66 "shorts" but a grand movie of an intricate ballet with highly divergent patterns and rhythms. It is in the rhythms of these patterns that one begins to appreciate what a well conceived general education curriculum, embodying the goals of liberal learning, may really be.

Since *Trends*' primary interest was in liberal education, especially as it was changing within university-wide or college of arts and sciences general education settings, our initial research efforts traced the rules in catalogs that directed students to take more or less general education credits. It is by means of catalog rules that we locate the first types of general education programs, requirements, and shifts in their patterns.³ Our study indicates that general education requirements are found in several differing extensions. There are universities which have one set of general education requirements for all baccalaureate degree-seeking students. Such institutions' requirements typically partially fulfill undergraduate bachelor of arts and sciences degrees, as well as bachelor of education, bachelor of science in business, bachelor of architecture, music, and fine arts degrees. In 1998 Temple University, for example, required a surprisingly uniform general education curriculum for *all* of its undergraduate students.

Second, another extension of baccalaureate requirements, especially in business and education, requires the professional schools to follow the categories and credit requirements prescribed by general education, but allows them to stipulate which of the

³ Our decision to focus the first phase of our study upon catalogues which contain descriptions of general education was predicated, in part, on the possibility that accreditors of professional programs might curtail general education and, thus, liberal learning by demanding that certain degrees require less general and, therefore, liberal education course taking. In the end, we found no statistical correlation between the addition or deletion of accreditation and the rise or fall in general education credits within an institution -- notwithstanding anecdotal evidence suggesting that general education credits were a function of accreditation policies of accreditors of professional programs. Indeed, our site visits have given us evidence that university administrators have successfully challenged claims by professional schools that accreditation policy will not permit compliance with institutional, general education policy.

“service courses” provided by the colleges of arts and sciences will fulfill those categories (e.g., Fordham and Samford). Sometimes departments are permitted to stipulate or strongly suggest.

Third, there are institutions which have so-called general education requirements, but allow schools to exempt portions of the general education requirements; that is, there is limited or no credit fulfillment in certain categories of general education. (e.g., Grambling, Hood). Typically, nursing programs and B.F.A's frequently fall into this group. Finally, some institutions have no university-wide, no truly “general” education requirements, leaving general education to the policy of each school (Boston University, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis).

Conversely, in university-wide general education we find in some of our institutions’ general education programs requirements for a whole university extended for College of Arts and Sciences, or CAS, students. For example, at the University of Miami all students must occupy 25% of their curriculum with general education requirements, but college of arts and science students must fulfill requirements which occupy 49% of their curriculum. These four patterns are always negotiated at large institutions some time in the institution’s life and they are not fixed for all time.

What is common to the vast majority of these arrangements is that the provision of general education rests, usually, upon the college(s) of arts and sciences or a “university college” which is staffed largely by college of arts and sciences faculty.⁴ Therefore, our data in *Trends* in general and core curriculum education are focused upon universal requirements and, when these are not extant, requirements for the college(s) of arts and sciences.

Trends data indicate that the average percentage of baccalaureate credits in all institutions devoted to general education programs in 1978 was 38.5. The average in 1998 was 41.4.⁵ The period between 1978 and 1982 saw the largest jump in average percentage of baccalaureate credits devoted to general education, from 38.5 to 39.5 %, while 1994/95 seems to have been the highwater mark, with the average reaching 42.1%. Between 1994 and 1998 the total baccalaureate credits devoted to general education dropped by .7%⁶ The overall increase in 20 years would, therefore, represent a 3.5 credit rise in a 124 credit baccalaureate – an average increase translating into a one or two course rise, depending on the campus. If many, large credit increases in general education in one

⁴ Conversely, professional schools rarely offer courses for general education that can be taken by all students in the institution and many institutions exclude professional schools from offering courses for general education.

⁵ Frederick Rudolph in *Curriculum* noted that Levine and Weingart in their *Reform of Undergraduate Education* had found that “a survey of curricular developments from the period from 1967 to 1974 confirmed persistent trends — increased specialization, choice of electives in the field of concentration, the increase of electives at the expense of general education but not at the expense of majors” (248). Our data indicates, then, a gain by general education at the expense of electives.

⁶ 78/79, 38.5; 82/83, 39.5; 86/87 40.2; 90/91, 40.5; 94/95, 42.1; and 98/99, 41.4.

cohort year marks reform, then for many schools, 1982 marked the era when reform in general education first began. 1990 was a time of significant change, too.

In 1978 the median percentage of credits devoted to general education was at 36. That is, half of the schools in our database anchored 36% or more of their curriculum in general education; half devoted 36% or less to the general education curriculum. By 1998 the median had risen to 40% of credits. The average and median figures are considerably larger than the “1/3 of curriculum” rule which administrators often use to roughly determine general education allocation. The figures are largely consistent with figures on the “percentage of [bachelor’s] programs consisting in general education” which Levine published in 1978. At that time he found the plurality of Research Universities and Comprehensive, Masters’ Universities, and Liberal Arts Colleges used 31 to 40%, while the plurality of Doctoral Universities, the Carnegie class with the fewest data points in our study, used 41-50% of their program’s credits for undergraduate education.⁷

Without reference to electives, our FIPSE survey concurs with the idea in general education literature that American higher, liberal, general education structures generally fall on a continuum of *categories* which shapes student selection of courses between the extremes of prescribed courses and free electives. The literature does not tend to treat the categories and subcategories statistically. This is understandable, since courses seem to matter the most and subjects, perhaps, next. But there is an important reason to watch trends, here. Categories are like the pillars of a pier; on each one some section of the structure rests. Subcategories, to extend the analogy a bit far, are extension of docks off the main pier. *This means that if categories and subcategories extend, an institution is increasingly differentiating or “distributing” its general education curriculum and its course directing structures – whether it be through a series of selections or mandated paths.* Such has been the case with the curricula of *Trends’* schools. When we add the number of categories and subcategories and compare trends, we find that differentiation measured in terms of total numbers of these increases with every year of our study, amounting to a 21% increase over 20 years.

Substantive Categories and Subcategories of General Education

To what subjects, then, did the expanded and differentiated credits devoted to general education go? Here, we treat “subjects” as the categories or subcategories, not the courses, that institutions require their students to take. The reason is that categories and subcategories organize course subjects and contain rules set by the faculty that direct student course-taking through a series of choices or mandates. Sometimes categories would direct students to specific courses. The most frequently found category is Natural Science as separate from a mathematics requirement. The next nine categories in rank order are: English composition, Social and Behavioral Science (usually a major distribution category), Math (separate from any other category), Foreign Language, Fine Art (excluding literature or philosophy, but including both appreciation/history and

⁷ Levine, *Handbook*, Table 2, 16.

studio/performance), Western Civilization or World Civilization (WCWC), Humanities (a major distribution category), Diversity (including Multiculturalism, Race, Other Culture and Gender requirements), and History. Lab requirements, a part of Natural Science, would place fifth in this ranking. Clearly, the rising tide of credits and differentiation has not floated all subjects.

(ii) *Causality and Innovations in General Education, 1978-2001.*

Sources for Identifying Causes of Change

The ethnographic data from interviewing faculty and administrators during the site visits, when combined with the database, are useful for five purposes:

- A search and confirmation of trends, in general education programs over the last 20 years
- A search for causes of changes in liberal education as located in general education.
- A search for typologies of general education programs.
- A documentation of "general education practices"
- Predictions of further developments in general education

The sections above have outlined the expansion and differentiation of general education in U.S. baccalaureate institutions over the last 20 years. The remainder of this summary treats causes of change in general, liberal education – the chief object of the original grant. Typologies, practices, and predictions will be developed in further publications as data is refined for further publication.

Causes of Change in General Education: 1978-2001

Eight general causes of change have emerged as a result of the investigations represented by the database, Institutional Profiles, and site visits.

1. *Academic leadership, either in a time of institutional crisis, institutional redefinition, or institutional re-examination.*
2. *Disciplinary differences in concepts of knowledge and aims of general education.*
3. *Departmental need for students*
4. *Rewards and support for faculty participation in general education as the institutional cause which supports general education.*
5. *Generational change in faculty*
6. *Organizational structure and general education review processes -- General Education Review processes may involve the use of assessment of student learning or educational audits.*
7. *Institutional traditions -- of curriculum and of intellectual heritage -- have their own momentum and potentials that may cause or direct change.*

8. *Government/system regulations -- Government systems' regulations may seriously change not only relatively unstructured but well-structured general education programs. Depending on the curriculum that is changed this may actually decrease structure of general education curricula.*

1) **ACADEMIC LEADERSHIP, EITHER IN A TIME OF INSTITUTIONAL CRISIS OR INSTITUTIONAL REDEFINITION** is a cause of change in general education. Leaders who establish significantly different general education programs tend to fit the times in the sense that as a group, they repeatedly bring to a faltering institution or to a problematic situation a conviction about excellence in liberal education – as a whole – and an ability to have colleagues take this concern very seriously, to the point of implementation. Leaders in more stable environments, in those institutions that do not face crises, are usually successful in reforms because they work closely with faculty to keep them informed about proposals and allow for input at all stages of the review and adoption process.

Tusculum College's Board of Trustees and faculty specifically welcomed new President Knott precisely because he was hired to save the college -- which was threatened by a huge enrollment decline and a complete loss of confidence in the prior administration by the faculty -- by restoring its lost liberal arts legacy within general education. He is credited by all in doing so. Don Schmeltekopf, after working under William Bennet at the National Endowment for the Humanities who, according to Schmeltekopf, "placed prominence on core and texts and really giving students the best the humanities had to offer," came to Baylor and, as a Provost seeking to strengthen the core, proposed an alternative, core and charged a faculty committee to develop the curriculum. Baylor's Interdisciplinary Core, instituted in 1995, was the result. Dean of the Faculty, Thomas Cochran, testifies to and is credited by faculty in helping to shape the University of North Carolina at Asheville's definition as the state's "liberal arts college" through his leadership in the general education program.

Not only administrators, but also faculty, of course, play key leadership roles. One of the most stable programs in the entire study, the University of Dallas' Core, was the inspiration of Louise Cowan and Donald Cowan, the former a Professor of English, the latter the institution's President. Louise Cowan, later, founded the Braniff Graduate School, a great books institution designed to generate professors devoted to great books liberal education along disciplinary lines (but not to extreme specialization), and it is her teachings that have inspired the foundation of two undergraduate great books colleges. Ethyle Wolfe, former classics professor at Brooklyn College, was so central to the establishment of the Brooklyn College Core Curriculum (in the face of considerable administrative opposition), that the College has named a liberal arts institute after her and she, eventually, succeeded to the position of Provost.

Leaders see opportunity in areas where significant institutional improvement is possible. Often these opportunities involve either localized crises or persistent problems and they lead to pervasive change and improvement in the institution through general education. Dean Scott Evenbeck exemplifies the former in using a budget crisis at Indiana

University – Purdue University Indianapolis to call into being both University College and a set of first year seminars. The Dean of the University College of Ball State exemplifies the use of resources to improve a general education, core program. Prof. Tom Lowe, Dean of General Education at Ball State, cooperated with faculty to build a program that includes an orientation program linked to core and to learning communities, a supplemental instruction program focusing particularly on core courses, and, finally, a review process which we used many times as a model in our site visit presentations.

2) ***DISCIPLINARY DIFFERENCES IN CONCEPTS OF KNOWLEDGE AND AIMS OF GENERAL EDUCATION*** shape general education curricula. So, for example:

i) Physical scientists are concerned with the practice of science per se; they do not find historical or philosophical purposes for their general education courses to be primary, though they will admit them as secondary. Repeatedly, we heard in our interviews that scientists teaching general education wanted to teach “how scientists think” and the “problem solving method.” And, in this regard, though some scientists seem to argue that such a method is peculiar to the sciences, others see it as especially well developed by the sciences but of wider extension than the sciences.

On the part of those who are concerned with the quality of science offered in general education, there is, perhaps, a concern that rigor is not maintained in general education. Aristotle remarks that “it is the mark of an educated man to look for precision in each class of things just so far as the nature of the subject admits.” Naturally, a standard appropriate to the subject sets rigor, but no one would argue that the precision expected of Ph.D. candidate is the precision expected of an undergraduate major in the sciences. The question arises, then, can rigorous courses for general education be constructed that are not leading to the major or into science-based fields such as medicine? The answer appears to be “yes.” Mike Ruiz, chair of the department of physics at the University of North Carolina at Asheville outlines the case: “the community of physicists realized about a half century ago that to reach general students you cannot expect them to know calculus (needed for the intro physics sequence for majors), or for that matter trigonometry (needed for the pre-med physics). You have to create new courses - courses not for the major - without math. Thus, at professional meetings (the American Association of Physics Teachers and the American Physical Society) for over four decades now, physicists have thought and thought - giving paper after paper - sharing with each other the results of innovative courses for general students”⁸

The disciplinary model of general education is, unquestionably, dominant in science general education courses. This is true even when institutions specifically coordinate general education science courses within a wider framework of a very specific core program. For example, Brooklyn College requires four half-semester courses that are specifically constructed for general education. (Majors may take alternatives.) These courses are divided into physics, chemistry, biology, and earth science or geology. *The paucity of interdisciplinary science courses – with the exception of “environmental*

⁸Michael Ruiz, Correspondence, 5/19/00

*science "is striking"*⁹. When we speak of "interdisciplinary" courses in general education in the sciences, outside of environmental science, we would be speaking of either history of science courses, topical courses, or "mixture" courses – the latter being a science course that attempts to treat physics, chemistry and biology as a whole. Occasionally, "mixture" courses which tend to incorporate a bit of history as a way to bring non-scientists to the world of science are successful. Boston University's two-semester, Core Curriculum Natural Science sequence is a rare example of a stable course.¹⁰

ii) Social Sciences are almost always inclined, with the exception of political science and/or history, to treat general education as the introductory course to a particular discipline where either the leading theories of a field are treated and/or methodologies are distinguished. Aside from diversity courses, the great exception to this disciplinary "rule" are the Western Civilization, rapidly becoming World Civilization (WCWC), courses that are offered by cooperative efforts of Political Science, History, Religion, and Humanities departments. We treat those below in the Humanities section.

In order to understand why social sciences tend to concentrate their general education courses into introductory and disciplinary courses, it is helpful to discuss, generally, the institutional origins of interdisciplinary courses. Institutionally, interdisciplinary courses seem to have three modes. There is the course taught by a single professor that claims to be either exploring a subject or using a series of methods that do not traditionally belong to the discipline of the professor. The other options are the team-taught course and the program-developed and commonly taught course. Interdisciplinary programs evidence all three modes of interdisciplinary courses with further sub-varieties within these distinctions.

Diversity courses are probably the area where the greatest proportion of interdisciplinary sole-authorship, courses from the social sciences arise. *The cooperative multi-faculty based social science course, including diversity courses, is rare.* One institution within the study that did achieve this is Baylor University which in their alternative track, Baylor Interdisciplinary Core, includes **five** interdisciplinary "World Culture" courses that are, to varying degrees, all a product of interdisciplinary faculty cooperation. If one seeks interdisciplinary general education courses about the social sciences (on the parallel that introductory courses to the various social sciences courses are about that social science), these are equally if not more rare. Two institutions with notable exceptions are Boston University and St. Bonaventure University.

⁹ The widespread conviction in all the scientific fields that students in general education should and do learn "the problem solving method" and, at least, come to appreciate "how a scientist thinks" may well displace any impetus toward interdisciplinary courses since, if the scientific method is general, then the particular branch of science is a matter of indifference with respect to method as learning goal. Needless to say, this also leaves, intact, disciplinary course offerings.

¹⁰ When physical scientists control the general education committee, they are deeply skeptical of interdisciplinary courses in other fields on two related grounds: they expect courses to be in a hierarchy which leads to a progression of study and they expect courses to be taught by authorities. Interdisciplinary courses have problems in both regards.

What, then, makes the usual social science general education course to be disciplinary and the path to interdisciplinary courses so “arduous”? Dr. Mumtaz Ahmad, a University of Chicago graduate, with appointments in Political Science and History at Hampton University explained a common set of goals for social science departments that we found in many interviews:

In general education, departments have two contributions in mind. First is to prepare students for the intense concentration of courses [that they will find in the major]. We want them to be prepared. The second is the pressing demand to make the social sciences applicable in general education. At Hampton the social sciences are valued considerably for the general education courses. They relate disciplinary knowledge to general ideas of culture and civilization.

Increasingly we see social theory moving closer to general theories in the humanities. Literary and social theory are interdependent. Post modern discoveries involve the insight that there is little difference in social sciences and the disciplines of the humanities. The sociology department and political science have been testing the boundaries of disciplines, exploring avenues. We see this in the Senior Seminar Theses that are not confined to conventional topics – e.g., election fraud – but rather, say, politics and hip-hop music. What is the political message conveyed by the lyrics? Another thesis on the Taliban was not political, but an analysis of the depiction of the Taliban.

Without question Dr. Ahmad is correct about the convergence of literary and social theory and the consequence this has for majors’ work,¹¹ but his points about preparing students for the discipline and relating disciplinary knowledge to general ideas of civilization or culture seems more explanatory of the typical configuration of social science requirements in general education: “choose two courses out of five or six departments,” with choices frequently labeled “introduction to social science discipline x.” Indeed, our interviews would lead us to this tentative observation: the social sciences, perhaps more than even the sciences, are acutely conscious of maintaining disciplinary boundaries.

Repeatedly, in interview after interview we heard the following point: the social sciences are “new” disciplines, just getting off the ground. Consequently, faculty members are very reluctant to blur that *disciplinary and scientific mark of distinction* with interdisciplinary courses which would not have the methodological precision that introductory courses seem to attain. A further complication is that most social scientists

¹¹ A related reason has to do with undergraduate institutions looking at what graduate institutions are demanding. Professor Dickenson in political science, who has been assistant to the Dean of the School of Liberal Arts and Sciences, added that “interdisciplinary courses are offered but are prohibited in political science because the department wants to guard their boundaries. When students go to graduate school in politics, the graduate schools look at the transcript.” In the sciences, a similar point was made by Lynn Durel, director of the applied medicine program at the University of Miami. They did not require foreign language precisely because their graduate schools did not look for it in undergraduates of Miami’s program.

are aware that the principles of each science may, in fact, differ enormously with the consequence that terms which appear shared between them actually end up being homonyms that are enormously polysemous. Frequently, social scientists will argue that scientific disciplinarity and subject matter differences, thus, preclude interdisciplinary efforts.¹² This, of course, simply reinforces the introduction to majors emphasis of so many general education social science courses.

iii) Humanities are governed, in so far as we are speaking about disciplinarity, by skills concerns which fall to English, Speech, and, sometimes, Foreign Language departments. Further, our study tends to show, though statistics need to be developed here, that humanities departments and programs tend to offer more courses (not necessarily higher level) for general education. We may put this a bit starkly by noting that we have ample evidence to suggest that were it not for general education, there would be insufficient work or revenues for much of the college of liberal arts faculty in many institutions.¹³ The tendency of the arts to be inventive and “philosophic” in the sense that they are concerned with what might be possible, invented, or connected by analogy leads to interdisciplinary courses.

The “natural allies” of humanities programs in this endeavor, oddly, are not the Fine Arts departments, but the social sciences, especially of history, political science, and religion. Humanities departments, together with these social science departments, tend to form general education programs which are interdisciplinary: e.g., Eckerd College’s Western Heritage in a Global Context, Lewis and Clark College’s America courses, Reed College’s Humanities, Rhodes College’s Search courses, Samford University’s new Cultural Perspectives pair of courses, Temple University’s Intellectual Heritage program, the University of North Carolina at Asheville’s Humanities sequence, and the University of the South’s Tradition and Criticism in Western Culture courses.

¹² This is one of several reasons, to be outlined after further analysis of data, to call into question the “new disciplines” argument, above. The interviews at Baylor University with social science faculty were particularly revelatory of efforts, often stymied, to bridge these differences in principle. On the other hand, Baylor’s alternative BIC core program, serving 225 students, is a case in point of professors in the same institution cooperating to produce interdisciplinary, general education courses based in a high degree on the social sciences.

¹³ For example, speaking about the motives leading up to the construction of Temple University’s common core, great books courses in the Intellectual Heritage program, Stephen Zelnick, former director, comments that “there was, however, a secondary agenda. The two-course IH Program was a way to employ faculty in the humanities and theoretical social sciences at a time of falling enrollments in those disciplines.” In *Alive at the Core: Exemplary Approaches to General Education in the Humanities*. Ed. Michael Nelson and Associates. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 2000, 256. The revival of Tusculum College which depended on a rejuvenated core staffed by a previously moribund liberal arts faculty is a larger case in point. We may generalize. Given the fact that easily over 90% of all general education courses in the social sciences and humanities are, of course, provided by those faculty not only for their own students but for varying and increasing portions of students in other disciplines and schools, it is clear that departments derive huge revenues from these courses. Whether they put full time faculty in them is another matter.

We see, then, an interesting educational divide concerning interdisciplinary courses. In the social sciences that are concerned with methodology, interdisciplinarity is an achievement posterior to introductory courses in the various methodologies. If interdisciplinarity is spreading from these quarters, it is spreading from the “top down.” On the other hand, social sciences that are more philosophically based tend to align with humanities fields to produce broad-based general education programs that serve as introductions to civilization or culture or religious traditions (especially as expressed through texts of literature, drama, philosophy, religion, politics, and histories) and that form either the intellectual foundation or the intellectual spine of four-year bachelor of arts and sciences degrees.¹⁴

iv) Fine Arts are less frequently included as an identifiable category or subcategory of general education than are the three previous areas of disciplines, when the Humanities and the interdisciplinary WCWC courses are taken together. When included, fine arts divide in their treatment of general education depending on how they mimic a longstanding argument concerning the relation of the fine arts, particularly music, to liberal education. The issue is whether appreciation and/or performance should be part of general education. This issue, in turn, is answered in varying ways by art, music and dance, and theatre departments, depending on their professional or liberal arts attitude toward the fine arts.

3) **DEPARTMENTAL NEED FOR STUDENTS.** Many departments use the general education program for enticing students into their programs as majors and, consequently, they argue for its various structures and rules on the basis of their ability to garner those students. For example, Dexter Callender of the University of Miami's religion department notes that “the department gets students through the general education requirement. . . . The Introduction to Religion, New Testament, and Hebrew Bible courses serve the purpose of

¹⁴ The distinction between methods and philosophy is not fanciful and may inform deep divisions within a given social science. See, e.g., CHE 12/21/01, 48, 17, A7 “Peer Review,” “Bitter in-fighting led to the departures of three chairmen [of the political science department] in four years.... The troubles stem partly from philosophical differences, reflecting a rift in the discipline between those who favor a statistics-based methodology and others who push for a less mathematical approach.” Education writers recognize it as a distinction in kinds of education; see Brann's distinction between rational theorizing and contemplative theorizing as they inform undergraduate education. In the former, “such theorizing consists of the production of mental artifacts, of rational constructions. It is, to be sure, an attempt to reproduce in the human realm the successes of the science of nature. But more fundamentally, it is an effort to apply universally the mode of rationality, usually in the shape of a *methodology*, that is to say, a theory of method. . . .” (131). In the latter, “the classical meaning of the word *theory*, as I have pointed out before, is contemplation, ‘viewing.’ It is an activity whose end is not to produce a theory, or to dissolve the matter of inquiry, since a solved problem is a matter of indifference. . . .Students come to college at least acquainted with some fields of knowledge. For the sake of knowing their own knowledge, they should be granted a time of enforced inchoateness before they go to advanced study in the field they choose. This is precisely where the reading of the originating authors assures the greatest freedom from presuppositions: *their* subject matter is not yet firmly fenced in; the divisions of knowledge are still in question” (132, 59,118). In other words, Brann is speaking about “interdisciplinary,” “multi-disciplinary” or, truthfully, *not-yet-disciplinary* education. It may also be worth mentioning, that though Brann locates this discussion within the realm of republican education, she locates the end of “theoria” as “knowing one's own knowledge.” *Paradoxes of Education in a Republic*.

introducing students to the faculty of religious studies. . . . We keep them through the display, about 30-40 majors for a five person department.” Analysis of database trends shows persistent attempts, in structural reorganizations, to make sure that each department devoted to general education instruction receives the same seat-time or course credits. Without any question, departments regularly calculate the advantages that accrue to their departments if students take general education courses under certain rules. Without question, interdisciplinary interdepartmental programs rarely survive unless the department of origin of the faculty member gets credit for teaching the courses. Less obvious and more difficult to detect is student course taking behavior as a cause of change in departmental and institutional adjustments of rules for taking general education courses.

4) **REWARDS AND SUPPORT FOR FACULTY PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL EDUCATION.** This is *the instrumental, institutional cause which supports general education*, since there is no “field or discipline” of general education outside of institutions. Faculty teaching in general education depends, in large part, on the external motives which induce faculty to join. These include: institutional leadership opportunities; faculty support groups; institutional incentives for teaching in general education versus publishing in one’s field; institutional incentives to settle faculty disputes by providing a general education program with certain characteristics; hiring with the stipulation that *all* faculty are expected to teach in a common core set of courses; promotion and tenure questions about the value of work performed on behalf of interdisciplinary, general education programs; the creation of interdisciplinary courses to settle faculty disputes about general education or to strengthen and define the characteristic liberal education of an institution; the creation of supporting programs for intellectual and pedagogical work on behalf of liberal/general education; and the involvement of entire faculty in general education assessment programs as a way to strengthen the institution in terms of excellence of liberal education. Without question, rewards instantiate programs.

Short-term and one-time infusions of faculty, frequently for program or course development, are standard practice in successful general education program building. Course and program development may be part of what an institution expects of its faculty, but demands on faculty also include publishing and other non-academic forms of service. Hence, for those *planning* review and reform of general education, targeted support provides the relief and boost for faculty efforts. We would cite Scott Evenbeck’s efforts at IUPUI and Tom Lowe’s at Ball State as sufficient evidence of the efficacy of such targeted efforts. Similar efforts have been undertaken in Temple University’s Intellectual Heritage program.

5). **GENERATIONAL CHANGE IN FACULTY.** *Within ten years most senior faculty of institutions, faculty whose career beginnings pre-date our study, will have retired.* This has three related but distinct features. First, faculty which have shared either a successful or failed reform effort, strongly identify with each other and, as time passes, tend to think of the experience, whether successful or not, as one of the most important institutional and sometimes intellectual efforts of their careers. This experience means that a substantial cadre of faculty are subsequently involved for prolonged periods, if not their

whole careers, in some aspects of general education. And, further, this means that faculty who have been through such reform are vested in that reform. Like planetary systems forming out of stellar dust, the formation of these faculty groups can be detected by noting whether a significant review/reform effort is proposed, underway, or is producing results.

Second, aware that they are passing, senior faculty are becoming concerned with a legacy. This can become a stumbling block to change or an opportunity for faculty enculturation into the heritage and tradition of the current core. The number of new hires has drawn the attention of both administration and faculty to the undergraduate experience of newly-minted Ph.D's. One college has begun to scrutinize its new hires and hiring pool for a degree drawn from a Carnegie Baccalaureate institution and more than one college faculty has remarked that trying to find a willingness to teach in core or general education programs is part of the scrutiny given to prospective hires.

Increasingly we received reports by senior faculty that the new hires simply have little or no conception of what a *general, liberal education, particularly one crafted by an institution to reflect its values and historical traditions, is*. Therefore, some institutions that take special care to craft unique and particular general education programs also look to enculturating their faculty into the institution's general, liberal education traditions.

6) **ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND GENERAL EDUCATION REVIEW PROCESSES**. Not all institutions organize their general education programs within the same structures and not all processes of review within institutions are the same. These appear to have effects upon general education. We may note the kinds of organizing and review processes found.

Organizational structure

Typically, general education is less an administrative organization than a curricular arrangement "managed" by at least one committee on general education. Usually, a director exists, but this is often a director without any hiring or review powers and, frequently, with minimal incentives to steer the direction of general education. Typically, course offerings are departmental decisions and, so, course staffing follows accordingly.

Recently, institutions, within and without the Trends study, have been replacing the arrangements described above with centralized administrative units devoted to general education. Indiana University Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI), Ball State University, Baylor University, and Boston University have all adopted different forms of this organization.

Recently, "alternate track" core programs have developed. These are non-honors programs, often with administration and organization of course giving completely separate from the "main" general education program. Baylor University's BIC program exemplifies this approach.

Processes of review

Generally, processes of review of general education divide into two types: “occasional” and “periodic.” “Occasional” review still seems to be the dominant mode, though under the pressure by regional accrediting agencies for assessment, institutions seem to be moving toward the periodic. No single pattern of occasions seems discernible from our site visits, though, increasingly, strategic institutional reviews, especially by an incoming administration, are the occasion for wholesale general education reviews.

The alternative to this is periodic review. Two modes of periodic review seem to prevail: general education review as part of a larger institutional assessment and general education review as an autonomous, regularized procedure. In the first mode, general education is reviewed as part of a larger, institutional self-assessment. This first mode may take the form of either an accreditation self-study which, however infrequent, is roughly periodic (seven to ten years). The alternative is an annual (or scheduled, multi-year) review system of departmental performance. The second mode of review is directly concerned with general education, per se. This, too, has two forms: review of the whole program and review of a portion of the program. The key to these different approaches seems to be whether general education is seen as an administratively distinct unit of the institution or whether it is seen simply as a curricular arrangement.

Assessment of Student Learning or the Educational Audit

Repeatedly, in our study, we find that faculty and administrators tell us that regional accrediting agencies have asked for evidence of student learning. Faculty resistance exists, but tends to be overcome by three factors. First, Presidential (or administrative) leadership does commit to assessment because of regional accreditation pressure. Second, administrative leadership may provide the intellectual grounds to faculty for pursuit of assessment – namely, assessment answers the question “how do we know we are producing a good, liberal arts (or general) education”? Third, faculty simply need to develop assessment models and need help in developing methods of how to gather evidence.

7) INSTITUTIONAL TRADITIONS -- OF CURRICULUM AND OF INTELLECTUAL HERITAGE -- HAVE THEIR OWN MOMENTUM AND POTENTIALS THAT MAY CAUSE OR DIRECT CHANGE. It comes as no surprise to say that faculty tend to graft new general education programs on structures which they have used before. In this sense, even a very unstructured distribution system can present a model that faculty will employ to build further structure, since a faculty can always add a few credits and one more category of course taking; the result will be greater structure.

However, institutions have their own intellectual or ethical traditions which they may reach into to solve a crisis or, less ambitiously, to graft new structures upon a tried curriculum. This is probably the single most important *principle* in building new general education programs, since (a) liberal education is, first and foremost, a matter of institutional not disciplinary synthesis, and (b) distinctive liberal educations based on

identifiable institutional traditions are tantamount to locating an educational market niche.

8) ***Government/system regulations; government systems regulations may seriously change not only relatively unstructured but well structured general education programs toward a common "middle" curriculum.*** Political pressures upon public educational systems to facilitate transfers, not to mention the economic advantages which may accrue to institutions willing to accept transfers, have resulted in government higher education systems mandating core curricula *which actually reduce the specificity, uniqueness, and overall structure of highly articulated cores at some institutions within the larger system* . Three cases have come to the fore in our site visits. City University of New York has mandated a core curriculum which, in part, requires that students take one history course -- of any kind whatsoever. CUNY's Brooklyn College has a nationally recognized core curriculum, the history component of which is "Shaping of the Modern World." This course was specifically designed by the BC faculty and is the only history course in that curriculum. BC is now being forced to accept transfer students who have any history course.

Grambling University had developed the above mentioned general education courses, specifically the General Education Symposium, taken from sophomore to senior year as a two-credit course, and a required Lyceum course taken in the freshman year which involved lectures for the whole campus (often invited guests from off-campus) and classroom discussions. In 1999 legislators of Louisiana urged the Board of Regents to make degree requirements across the system equivalent so as to facilitate transfers. In consequence, the BA was reduced from 128 to 125 credits at Grambling and, in response, the faculty voted to cut out the courses above in an effort to protect as many of the credits for the major/departmental programs as they could.

The University of North Carolina system has developed transfer agreements that equate courses from one institution to another. Peg Downes, former director of UNCA's Humanities program, narrates the consequences this has for transferring students:

The articulation agreement presents our transfer students with some problems. They can take any of a long list of humanities courses, which then count as UNCA's HUM 124 and 214; these include things like Dance, Pottery-Making, etc.--all nice to learn about, but nowhere near the ballpark we've established in our HUM courses. The discussion and writing we emphasize in our HUM courses (not to mention our assignment of primary-source texts, and other rather rigorous stuff) are not likely to be found, in many of these permitted courses. So when students get here, and have to take the final two (HUM 324, 414) courses, as well as ARTS 310, they're often overwhelmed. There's not much we can do, about the articulation agreement's contours, but at the beginning of each semester, Humanities and Arts 310 instructors make an effort to identify and work with transfer students on any problems they might encounter in these upper-level general education courses. Because the classes are relatively small (22 max.), there's opportunity for helping such students. These students advisors also are attuned to these potential problems, and work to ease students' transfers to UNCA.¹⁵

¹⁵ Correspondence, 12/17/01 and 12/20/01.

F (2) Project Evaluation

A three-person board of external evaluators assessed this project toward the end of the first year. Their summative evaluation praised the quality of data collected and the insight provided by the trends that were evident. Finding no evidence for statistically significant impact of specialized accreditation or student vocational concerns on the structural changes in general education documented, the formative evaluation recommended abandoning the collection of these data and this working hypothesis in favor of other, more significant factors such as departmental proliferation, majors, disciplinary turf wars, and other more conventional understandings of the “battle over general education” in the college context. The evaluators agreed with the formative changes that one had recommended at the outset, to dispense with use of doctoral students and capping project participation at 60 institutions. Finally, the subsequent years’ summative and formative evaluations were entrusted to the senior academic member of the board in an effort to streamline management and conserve financial resources for the project itself. The final summative evaluation recommended extending this work to community colleges and their students, on the grounds that over 60% of undergraduate general education coursework is done in such institutions.

Throughout the latter stages of the project, the principal investigators asked participating institutions to prepare summary evaluation reports on the usefulness of the interviews, profiling, and consultation provided by project staff to their institutions. These comments were forwarded electronically as received to our FIPSE program officer. So, for example, at the 2000 FIPSE Project Directors’ Meeting on a panel on this project, Tony Brunello, Associate Dean of General Education at Eckerd, stated that

The impact of the [*Trends*] site visit was of timely significance not only because of our traditions at Eckerd College, but also because as part of our accreditation process with [SACS], we were concluding our focused self-study. . . . General Education figured largely in this evaluation. . . . The analysis of history provided by the FIPSE site visit and the institutional profile identified salient characteristics that increased our understanding of the nature of our program and how it compares to other institutions. . . . The most notable element of the role of General Education highlighted by the [*Trends*] visit is perhaps in interdisciplinary study. We found that just as we have fertile soil and a strong tradition, we would also like to do more, and in fact due to changes in the school over time, perhaps we do less than when the school was founded. . . . We realized that General Education, and in particular the universal commitment of our faculty in the first year core program, is the well-spring for a large proportion of interdisciplinary initiative on our campus. . . . The negative tendency for faculty to stay within the confines of their disciplinary worlds is confronted directly by a team taught General Education environment. . . . We tended to think of ourselves as devoting a relatively large proportion [of the curriculum to general education], but the FIPSE study demonstrates we are about at the norm . . . This . . . stands in relieve against the criticisms of some of our faculty who argue that we devote too much time and resources to General Education. The visit raised a number of thought-provoking questions about the effectiveness of our approach to teaching and evaluating writing proficiency. In fact, this has led to an interest in looking at our institutional assessment process as a whole, and perhaps [to] developing some new ways to look at our teaching effectiveness and learning outcomes.”

The institutions selected for advanced participation, institutional profiles, and site visits were understandably more enthusiastic about, and wedded to the project than those that supplied merely catalogues during the initial phase... Many schools commented favorably on project follow-through. One institution's representative praised the field work and follow-up communication his school received, indicating that on many prior occasions he had been asked to submit "survey information" on general education to various academic groups, never to hear from them again. The IP and site visit, by contrast, gave confidence that the picture of his institution we had developed was extraordinarily accurate and thorough.

G. Summary, Conclusions, and Lessons Learned

The overall results of this project challenge prevailing views that general education is in decline or is academically impoverished. Instead, our project reveals that general education is generally a complex function of faculty interests and institutional drive for improvement in the competition for students. Despite complaints of faculty and senior administrators to this effect, vocationalism and the impact of professional courses and specialized accreditation have proven far less significant than the increasing demand for student choice and student freedom, coupled with departmental proliferation and disciplinary competition in each institution's curriculum. The role of secondary "selection rules" and exclusion principles (i.e., rules governing the exercise of student choice and course selection in fulfillment of stated requirements, as described briefly above) has emerged as a highly significant factor that is not well understood.

As noted, eight general causes of change have emerged as a result of the investigations represented by the database, Institutional Profiles, and site visits.

1. *Academic leadership, either in a time of institutional crisis or institutional redefinition.*
2. *Disciplinary differences in concepts of knowledge and aims of general education.*
3. *Departmental need for students.*
4. *Rewards and support for faculty participation in general education.*
5. *Generational change in faculty.*
6. *Organizational structure and general education review processes.*
7. *Institutional traditions.*
8. *Government/system regulations.*

While the most prestigious national institutions do tend, as charged, toward lightening their distribution requirements and abandoning required core curricula in general education, moreover, our study revealed that the majority of institutions outside the most elite status emphasize innovative gen ed curricular opportunities as a means of attracting and retaining students, and strengthening the caliber of demonstrable learning achievement in their graduates. And within that elite status Columbia and the University of Chicago are recurrent examples that strong liberal, general education structures may exist. Some of the resulting experiments of other institutions have proven quite comprehensive and ingenious.

As there is no “field or discipline” of general education outside of institutions of higher education themselves, each institution’s faculty reward system strongly influences the quality and character, as well as the impetus for change, reform, and improvement. Faculty teaching in general education depends, in large part, on the external motives which induce faculty to join. These include institutional leadership, faculty support groups, institutional incentives for teaching in general education versus publishing in one’s own scholarly field, and institutional incentives to settle faculty disputes by providing a general education program with certain characteristics. Our interviews have tended to pick up these institutional incentives ranging from hiring with the stipulation that *all* faculty are expected to teach in a common core set of courses (Eckerd College), to promotion and tenure questions about the value of work performed on behalf of interdisciplinary, general education programs, to the creation of interdisciplinary courses to settle faculty disputes about general education (Lewis and Clark’s *Inventing America* course) or to strengthen and define the characteristic liberal education of an institution (Reed’s Humanities course), to the involvement of entire faculty in general education assessment programs as a way to strengthen the institution in terms of excellence of liberal education (Ball State).

In the absence of a clear incentive contract for general education (as in Eckerd’s case), the second factor regarding criteria for promotion and tenure come into play as the single most significant factor governing faculty participation in a quality program. Our site visits uncovered widespread bitterness and “burn out” among faculty who had taken the challenge of core competencies and the goal of broad and deep liberal learning for their undergraduates seriously. One comment (that the faculty member agreed to allow us to print) spoke volumes, for legions:

I sacrificed about 15 years of my professional life to teach [an upper level common core, common text course] with my colleagues. [To learn the diverse subject matters and texts of the course] I suffered greatly for four years. Then, I strove for the next four years to get on my feet. Then, for the next four years I strove for what I thought was the highest level of teaching and contribution to [my institution] - to co-edit the [reader] for the course. [This involved] finding readings on my own [entirely out of my area]. I am very proud of this. It, along with my piano concertos and a few chosen publications in [science], rank as my best work. Do you know how many papers in [science] this [common reader] translates to? If I were teaching in my field instead of struggling to conduct discussion classes on the French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Karl Marx, romantic poetry, women's studies, slavery, etc. - I could easily have at least three papers per year in [science]. Now this is $12 \times 3 = 36$ publications. Instead, I have the [common reader] and other scholarly work but minus the 36 additional papers. Well, the [Faculty Review] committee this year . . . counted that co-authorship as 1/4 of a publication (after all there are three other authors and this is only an editorship... Now, Scott, why would I even think of doing something like this in any area? I can at least publish my notes in [my science course] and present my Java Applets [on my general education science courses] at professional meetings.

This particular faculty member left the common core sequence program at his institution the following semester.

Without question, rewards instantiate programs. General education initiatives will not tend to last if they are not administratively supported and, ultimately, if they do not financially support and reward faculty work. The most thorough such support possible is

to create faculty lines in programs. Reed College regularly makes joint appointments in its Humanities program and departments. The Humanities program has run for more than forty years, through all manner of intellectual changes. Recently, consequent upon the *Trends* site visit, Lenore Wright, associate director at Baylor University of the new Baylor Interdisciplinary Core (BIC), reported that her institution's president had approved two new faculty lines for the BIC program, directly as a result of the work faculty were doing in conjunction with AALE's FIPSE project!

Support for general education, however, is often less direct. Brooklyn College and Hampton University both have institutes which frequently attend to general education issues. Brooklyn's Evelyn Wolfe Institute brings in speakers on a nearly weekly basis to keep core (and other liberal arts) faculty abreast of current intellectual trends. The summer institutes at Hampton are part of the regularly scheduled duties of faculty and we had the pleasure of attending one of these during a site visit. These efforts lend pride to a faculty, for good reason, and provide a permanent framework for change *and it is characteristic of colleges or universities that have these kinds of institutional bulwarks that their core programs tend to be stable*. They offer the opportunity to address specific topics – e.g., “Writing Across the Curriculum” (WAC) programs – and they provide repeated opportunities for cross-departmental communication. This latter is simply invaluable in attempting to effect more radical change when need be.

Short-term and one-time infusions of faculty, frequently for program or course development, are standard practice in successful general education program building. Course and program development may be part of what an institution expects of its faculty, but demands on faculty also include publishing and other non-academic forms of service. Hence, for those *planning* review and reform of general education, targeted support provides the relief and boost for faculty efforts. We would cite Scott Evenbeck's efforts at IUPUI and Tom Lowe's at Ball State as sufficient evidence of the efficacy of such targeted efforts. Similar efforts have been undertaken in Temple University's Intellectual Heritage program.

Our overall institutional profiles show that innovation and reform in general education occurs in response to market forces, as well as perceived intellectual needs. Within the social sciences, the reform emphasis sustained during the past two decades tends toward greater emphasis on interdisciplinarity and a shrinking emphasis on disciplinarity. The most recent movements within humanistic liberal education are now in the continuing effort to blend multicultural and global liberal studies with traditional Western Civilization course themes.

To the degree that interdisciplinarity fosters the discovery of principles of thought and the history of allied intellectual and artistic enterprises, to that degree the liberal arts flourish. It is also very possible that the increasing attention to the conditions of general education – orientation, advising, learning communities, supplemental instruction, student learning outcomes assessment, and accreditation – will enhance general education and, at least in its pedagogic function, bring it closer to the traditions of emphasizing the *liberal arts teacher-learner* relationship, than the mass production model of much of mid-century general education. Outside the area of environmental science (where whole institutions

are devoting missions in this area), the interdisciplinary movement of the humanities and social sciences does not seem likely to affect the sciences which seem to have developed general education trends of their own along disciplinary lines.

Institutions can benefit from taking advantage of these general education trends, for they are the most dynamic and far ranging program that an institution is likely to undertake in an effort to increase retention and to promote the learning of all their students. If institutional improvement through crafted general education programs becomes a greater reality in the future as it has in the past, a sizeable proportion of institutions will find it necessary and beneficial to create the faculty support systems that amount to “post-graduate training” and, often, lead to those truly amazing intellectual revivals of whole faculty which are the wonder of liberal education.

Finally, in our project results there is little specific history about the development of general education goals with respect to (a) mission, (b) curricular structures, and (c) curricular goals. These are, really, the functional final causes of reform. With the recent rise of assessment, a history borne out of the materials of the *Trends* study is still possible and would become “concrete” with the materials that appeared in the late 90's. Were such a study undertaken, it would combine with the present state of this effort to aid in prediction, for a sense of whether faculty had matched their goals would develop and directionality of further reforms might almost be pinpointed.

Beyond that, the study has shown that innovation and reform in general education has both market and intellectual reasons for its acceleration. It will continue into the foreseeable future for five to ten years. It is also very possible that the increasing attention to the conditions of general education – orientation, advising, learning communities, supplemental instruction, student learning outcomes assessment, and accreditation – will enhance general education and, at least in its pedagogic function, bring it closer to the traditions of emphasizing the *liberal arts teacher-learner* relationship, than the mass production model of much of mid-century general education.

As noted, under the auspices of the Association for Core Texts and Courses and the ACTC Institute for Liberal Arts at the University of Dallas, our project continues at present to help participating institutions consider more adequate means of planning, reform, and assessment of the impact of general education required courses on student learning achievements at their institutions overall.