

Essential Studies



Oregon Tech Board of Trustees
Academic Quality and Student Success Committee
November 15, 2016

We are here today to tell you about a faculty-led innovation, focused on increasing student success. This exciting work by faculty began 3 ½ years ago with a charge from Provost, Brad Burda. A task force was formed to review Oregon Tech's general education, led by myself (Sandra Bailey) and CJ Riley, a faculty member in the Civil Engineering department.

This review was prompted by a request from the faculty-led General Education Advisory Council (GEAC) based on the following concerns:

- Lacking clearly-articulated rationale for gen ed (over 30 years since any substantive change)
- Learning outcomes were not aligned with gen ed

“Honestly I hated most of my general ed classes and found most of them to be pointless. If I see no value to what I am learning, I have a real hard time learning anything. I would say that some of my general ed classes were harder than my core classes simply because I saw no point in learning what they were trying to teach.”

(Oregon Tech Student/Alumni Survey Fall 2013)



At the onset of the review in the fall of 2013, the General Education Review Task Force (GERTF) surveyed current students, faculty and Oregon Tech alums.

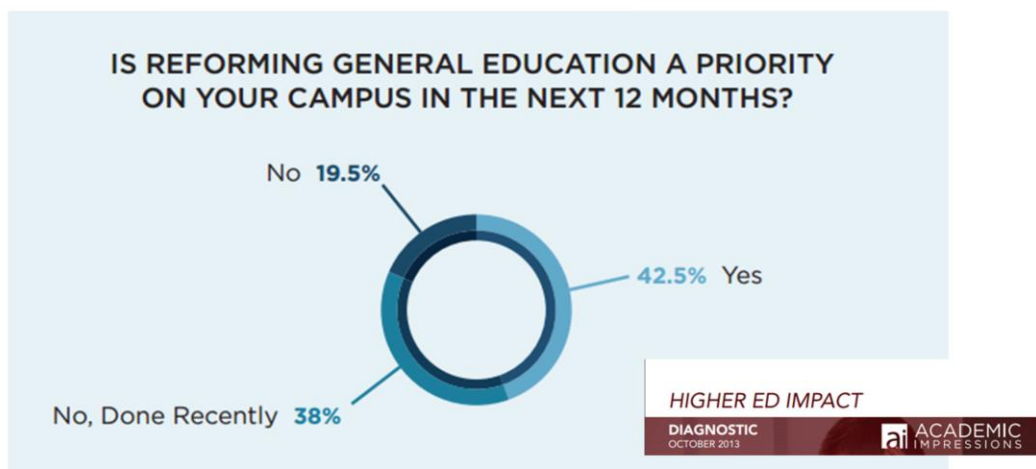
“I think there should be guidance in selecting general education courses. Why they are required (benefits), how someone might choose what they want (grouping and outcome), etc.”

(Oregon Tech Student/Alumni Survey Fall 2013)



Responses from all three groups and visits to each academic department provided valuable insights regarding perceptions of our current general education program and the foundation for developing a rationale.

Who else is doing this?



We are not alone, not only are most institutions taking a good look at general education, but for the same reasons...

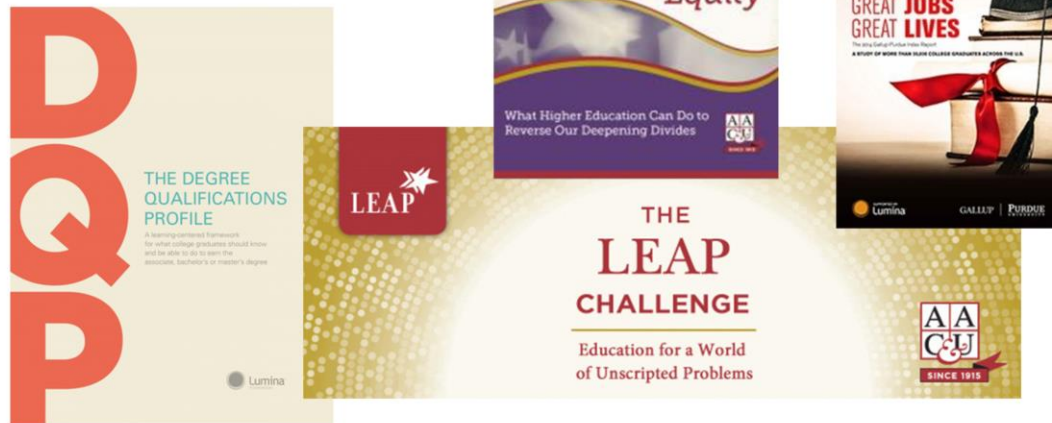
National landscape

A 2013 survey conducted by Academic Impressions in 2013 found 80% of more than 300 institutions surveyed recently completed or are currently involved with reforming their general education
(<http://www.academicimpressions.com/PDF/GeneralEducationReform.pdf>).

Increasing dissatisfaction with traditional distributive models of general education:
(<https://www.aacu.org/publications-research/publications/faculty-leadership-integrative-liberal-learning>)

- à la carte menu of disconnected survey courses: too many choices for students; fragmented, incoherent, frustrating
- Unclear goals/outcomes
- General education and the major set against one another
- No clear link to mission of institution

National Frameworks



The work of the General Education Review Task Force began with an external review. Looking at National frameworks defining skills college graduates should have and models supporting student success.

<http://degreeprofile.org/read-the-dqp/dqp-cover/>

<https://www.aacu.org/leap-challenge>

<https://www.aacu.org/publications/gems/maps-and-markers>

<https://www.aacu.org/publications/general-education-transformed>

<https://www.aacu.org/publications/step-up-and-lead>

<https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/gallup-purdue-index-report-2014.pdf>

Nearly all employers

91%

"agree that for career success, a candidate's demonstrated capacity to **think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems** is more important than his or her undergraduate major."

96%

"agree that all college students should have experiences that teach them how to **solve problems with people whose views are different from their own.**"

90%

"give hiring preference to college graduates with skills that enable them to contribute to **innovation in the workplace.**"

Employer expectations align.

"Employer Survey & Economic Trend Research." Association of American Colleges & Universities. 2014. Accessed June 14, 2016. <https://www.aacu.org/leap/public-opinion-research>.



the OREGON TALENT PLAN

“Education and training systems are
not aligned with industry needs...”

The landscape in Oregon is the same.

“The Oregon Talent Plan.” Oregon Talent Council, Nov. 2015. Accessed November 14, 2016. https://www.oregon.gov/EMPLOY/OTC/Documents/OTC_TalentPlanAdopted_11-12-2015.pdf.

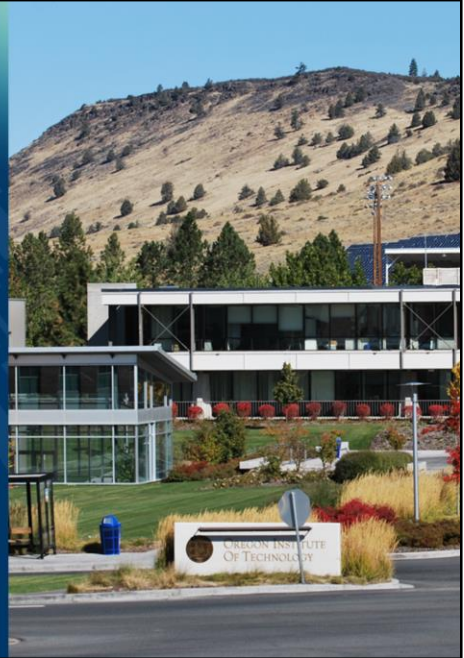
Guiding Principles

General Education at Oregon Tech is:

- **Aligned** with Oregon Tech's mission, vision, and strategic plan
- **Engaged** with the Oregon Tech Community
- **Informed** by internal and external expertise
- **Adaptable** to current and future needs

As the General Education Review Committee, we commit to:

- **Transparent**, open communication
- **Consensus**-based guidelines



From the beginning the Task Force designed their work to be transparent and inclusive which resulted in broad based buy-in of the final recommendations.

Transparent

- Surveys—faculty/students/alums
- Forums
- Workshops
- Department visits

Inclusive

- 100+ faculty/staff involved in committee work over the length of the review

Buy-in

- Unanimous vote by faculty senate April 2016
- Full executive staff support

Focus on Outcomes



Communication



**Inquiry &
Analysis**



**Ethical
Reasoning**



Teamwork



**Quantitative
Literacy**



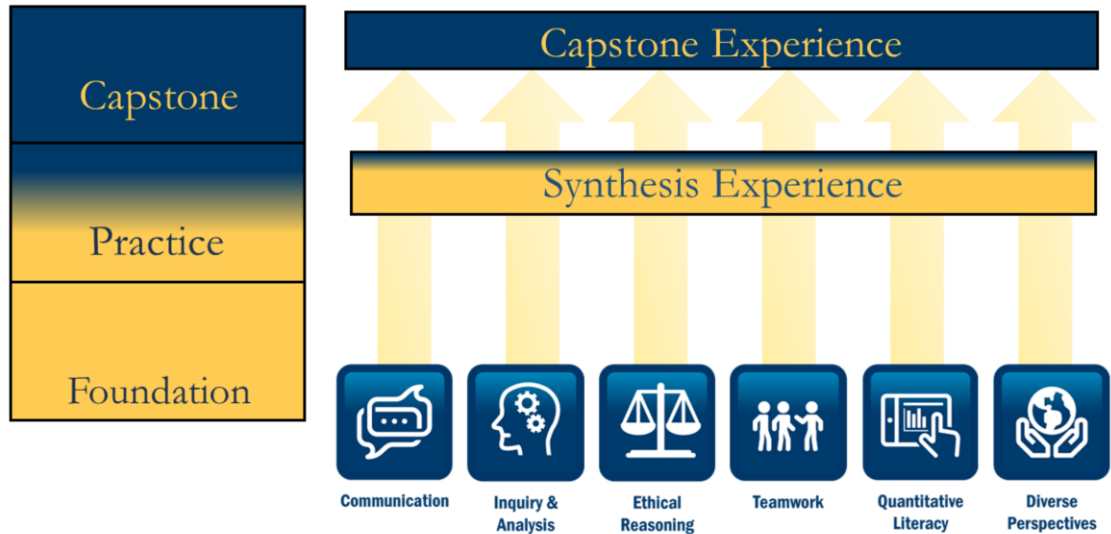
**Diverse
Perspectives**

“College can train engineers and give them an impressive tool box of engineering techniques, but if they can't think critically and creatively they are limited in the level of contribution they can make.”

(Oregon Tech Student/Alumni Survey Fall 2013)

Based on eight years of assessment data and recommendations from the Assessment Commission Executive Committee and newly formed Essential Student Learning Outcomes committees, Oregon Tech's eight Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs) were revised to six Essential Student Learning Outcomes (ESLOs). Defining expectations for all Oregon Tech graduates and providing the basis for our general education program.

Essential Studies: the Path to Success



The Essential Studies program (general education at Oregon Tech) consists of:

- **Pathways** providing intentional progression from foundation, through practice, to capstone levels of student achievement based on the university's six Essential Student Learning Outcomes (ESLOs).
- **Signature Experiences** (Synthesis & Capstone) in which ALL Oregon Tech students tackle complex challenges that require them to apply all learning outcomes.
- Intentionality and Integration of gen ed outcomes into the discipline key to this model

Oregon Tech's Essential Studies

- Intentional, scaffolded, developmental, integrated
- Personal, professional, and civic lifelong learners
- Personal growth and exploration, variety of choice
- Broad disciplinary and interdisciplinary learning
- Continuous review and improvement based on data
- High-impact practices supported by strong faculty professional development
- Upper division coursework may be required even for transfer students, but intentionally tied to lower division transfer work

This rationale developed through the review process provided not only the vision for the Essential Studies program, but will continue to provide context for future adjustments to the model.

Mission Focused

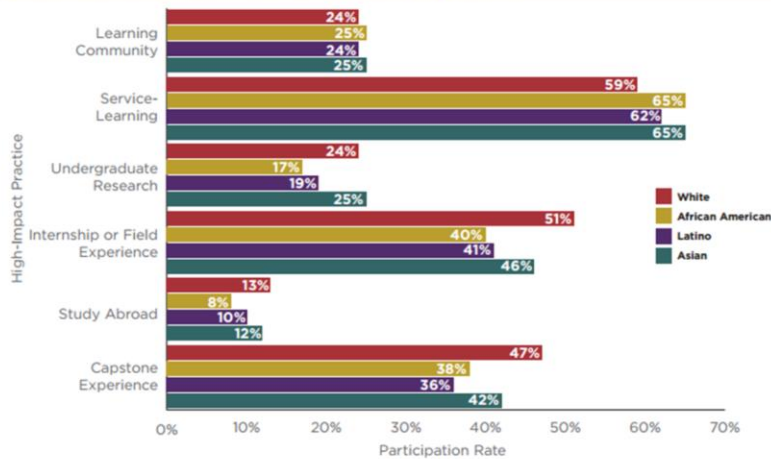


Essential Studies is a general education program that enforces our institutional identity:
“Hands on education for real world achievement”

A distinctive general education program that supports our brand and can be a
showpiece for Oregon Tech as we take the next step forward as a university.

Focus on Success for ALL Students

Students of color experience fewer high-impact practices



The Essential Studies program is designed with two signature experiences (high-impact practices) required of all students. Research shows these kind of experiences increase student engagement in their learning as well as improve retention and completion rates. Requiring these experiences of all students addresses equity in a unique way.

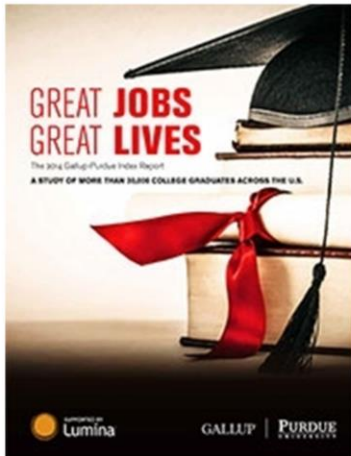
Equity (<https://www.aacu.org/publications/step-up-and-lead>)

- benefit *all* students.
- improving both completion rates and the quality of student learning.
- removing barriers to student success and devising integrative learning-centered plans—making intentional and evidence-based use of Essential Learning Outcomes and high-impact practices.
- Highlighting the success of students who have historically been underserved, the program supports work to make excellence inclusive and to recognize and nurture the assets students bring to college.
- all students can benefit from high-impact practices and highlights the value of such practices for students who have not been given access to high-impact learning.

High-Impact Practice Definition: ***Pedagogies and practices that challenge and stretch students.***

- Significant time on purposeful task
- Substantive interaction with faculty & peers
- Frequent feedback
- Engagement with difference
- Engage higher-order thinking
 - Analysis
 - Synthesis
 - Evaluation
 - Application
- Capacity to be “life-changing”

Focus on Alumni Engagement



8.7x

Higher if...[College] prepared me well for life outside of college.

8.1x

Higher if...[College] passionate about the long-term success of its students.

The 2014 Gallup-Purdue Index Report

(<https://www.luminafoundation.org/files/resources/galluppurdueindex-report-2014.pdf>), a study of more than 30,000 College Graduates across the U.S. indicates the odds of being emotionally attached to alma mater are much greater when student engagement is high.

Focus on Transfer Students



"My education has provided a lot of overlap with previous classwork and required general electives. Identifying SLO's expected from each class and matching with transfer classes would be a much improved method over matching specific courses. Sometimes the course material is not the same, but the SLO's are still satisfied."

From the beginning the Task Force focused on improving transfer pathways for students. Currently Oregon Tech is reaching out to transfer partners exploring outcomes based transfer models like the Interstate Passport (<http://www.wiche.edu/passport/about/overview>).

The Interstate Passport is a learning outcomes-based framework for transfer with the goals of improving graduation rates, shortening time to degree, and saving students' money. The new transfer framework focuses on lower-division general education, the common denominator among most institutions—concentrating on it as a whole, not on individual courses—and allows for a crossborder “match” of outcomes-integrated general education for block transfer.

Benefits for:
Students.

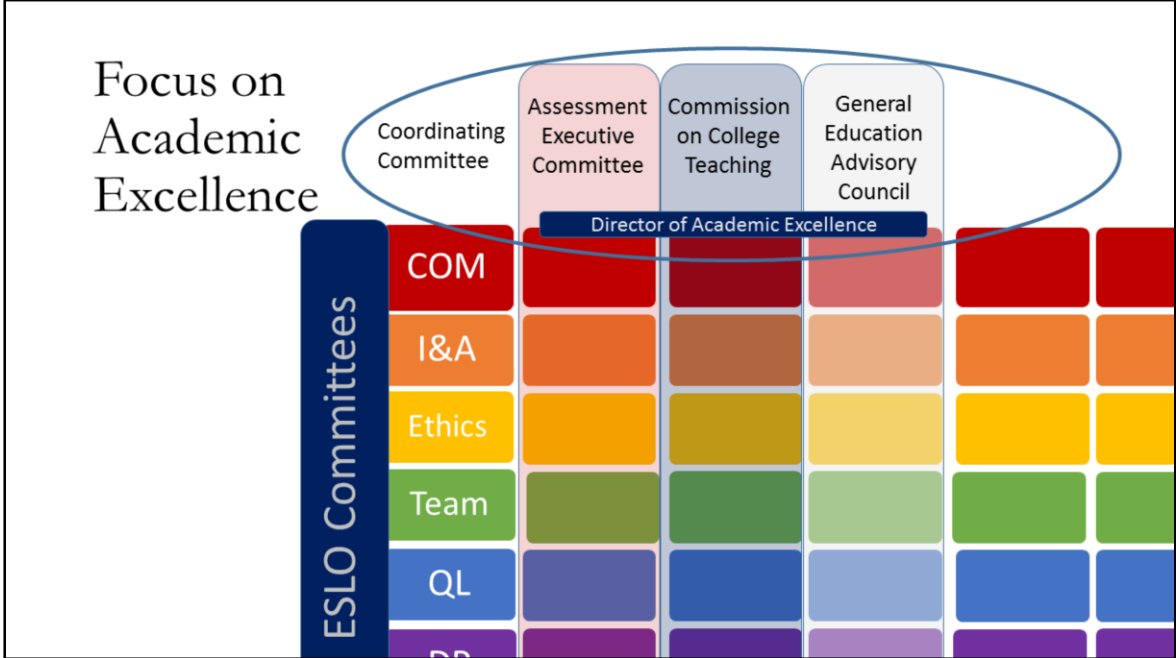
- An early milestone on the way to a credential to encourage persistence.
- Advance knowledge that lower-division general education learning will be recognized upon transfer.
- Faster time to degree, which will lower cost, reduce debt, and decrease foregone earnings from unduplicated learning.

Faculty.

- Opportunity to construct the institution's Passport Block: a list of courses/learning experiences that prepare its students to achieve quality learning outcomes.
- Flexibility to make curricular changes in its Passport Block without triggering equivalency reviews.
- Opportunity to collaborate with colleagues on interstate faculty teams.

Institutions.

- Opportunity to align lower-division general education learning outcomes with a national network of institutions.
- Fewer unnecessary or duplicated courses means greater student motivation to complete and faster time to degree, improving completion agenda performance metrics
- Reduced time and effort spent in renegotiation of equivalencies as lower-division GE courses and disciplines evolve.
- A leading role in shaping a general education model based on learning outcomes that may broadly influence outcome-based approaches into the future.



As well as providing a rationale for general education at Oregon Tech and the new model for general education (Essential Studies), the General Education Review Task Force implemented a new structure to support ongoing assessment and continuous improvement. This focus on quality and continuous review will allow faculty to make changes as needed and support the evolution of general education as technology, workforce needs, and best practices continue to evolve.

Implementation

- Fall 2018
- Program Curricular Changes
- Resource Needs Study
- Transfer Impact Study
- Development of Critical Path Timeline



We are now in the implementation phase with a catalog deadline of fall 2018.

This work on implementation, which began last April continues...

November 2016:

- Development of Critical Path Timeline to prepare for incoming class in Fall 2018 with input from various offices and individuals including: Registrar, Admissions, Advising, Strategic partnerships, Academic agreements, Curriculum Planning Commission, Marketing and Communication, Finance, Online Education.
- Program Curricular Mapping—to identify necessary curricular changes and provide information for resource planning.

Winter 2017:

- Resource Needs Study
- Transfer Impact Study