Creating a 21st-Century General Education

**Responding to Seismic Shifts**

February 14, 2019 to February 16, 2019

The Westin St. Francis

335 Powell Street

San Francisco, CA 94102

There is an emerging—and necessary—revolution occurring within general education. This revolution is led not by higher education “disruptors” intent on breaking apart existing systems, but by innovators creating intentional, coherent, engaging, and integrated educational experiences. College and university faculty, cocurricular professionals, and other academic leaders are leveraging research on what facilitates and strengthens liberal learning for all students seeking the benefits of higher education. Their revolution is based on the recognition that twenty-first-century general education

* must be a central mechanism for integrating knowledge and developing higher-order learning skills and abilities rather than a set of unconnected introductory courses;
* must connect with the learning goals of the major, the work of student affairs, and the goal of preparing students for lifelong learning;
* is the foundation for equity in preparing current and future civically engaged graduates;
* is a potentially powerful tool for retention and completion; and
* provides valuable and enduring professional development for the current and future workforce.

In the context of urgent social challenges such as growing economic and demographic segregation and a breakdown of public trust in higher education at large, general education must prepare students to

* create meaning and sense in the face of the active denigration of reason, evidence, and facts;
* use critical thought, reflection, and considered judgment to countervail a culture defined by snap decisions, distrust, and division;
* value difference and diverse viewpoints as the cornerstone of a thriving democracy.

AAC&U’s 2019 Network for Academic Renewal conference on General Education and Assessment invites colleagues from all areas of the higher education landscape to join us in sharing efforts to create intentional and integrated programs, to assess our current practices, and to generate evidence of high-quality learning within our educational experiences for all students.

**Dialogues for Learning**

Throughout the conference, participants will have opportunities to engage with colleagues through a set of dialogues on what a twenty-first-century general education needs to offer. These dialogues may address the following questions:

* How can we organize general education to result in student integration of learning across content areas?
* How can general education designs improve students’ ways of knowing?
* How do we make siloed organizational structures coherent and purposeful?
* How can general education be a sense-making and meaning-making experience for students?
* How do we critically examine and reshape academic structures and systems that were created for a different time and place?
* How can we make assessment processes and results matter for students and faculty?
* What if the critics are correct, and much of how we assess is wrong?

An opening plenary will frame the dialogue by encouraging participants to consider these questions and inviting attendees to define additional queries. Concurrent and poster sessions will provide examples of how participants are implementing, assessing, and/or revising different attempts to address these topics. On the final day, participants will reflect on the questions, consider what they have learned from sessions, and share what they see as the path forward to a twenty-first-century general education.

Conference participants will examine promising examples and emerging change strategies to seed idea exchanges and networks that will help expand and support efforts to understand what works, for whom, how, and why.

<https://www.aacu.org/conferences/gened/19>