

# Key Features of Effective General Education Programs

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STEP Session 2

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# Intended Learning Outcomes

- Define the purposes of general education programs
- List common features of GE programs
- Compare CityU's outcomes and current implementation with 'Best Practices'

# Outline of Today's Presentation

- Why have General Education? What is GE?
- Historical Features of GE Programs
- Common Features of Cutting Edge GE Programs
- Effective Practices for Implementing GE Programs

Why Have General Education?

What is General Education?

# Why General Education?

- UGC mandated a 4 year curriculum
- But why?
  - In periods of change, narrow specialization condemns us to inflexibility – precisely what we do not need. **We need the flexible intellectual tools to be problem solvers, to be able to continue learning over time.**

David Kearns, former CEO of Xerox Corporation

# Defining General Education

What does General Education  
mean to you today?

Concept Mapping (Mind Mapping) activity

# Defining General Education

- That part of a curriculum that is shared by all students, provides broad exposure to multiple disciplines, and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capabilities.

[http://www.aacu.org/leap/What\\_is\\_liberal\\_education.cfm](http://www.aacu.org/leap/What_is_liberal_education.cfm)

# Historical Features of GE Programs

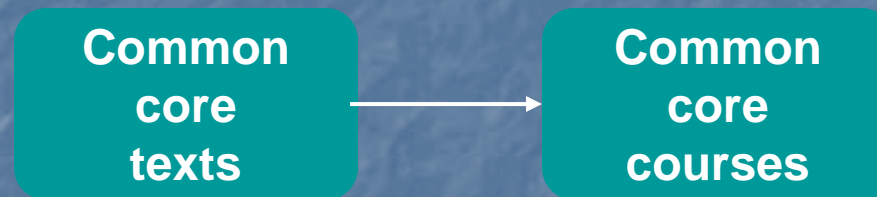


# Changing Designs for University Education

## The 19<sup>th</sup> century university

A common core curriculum

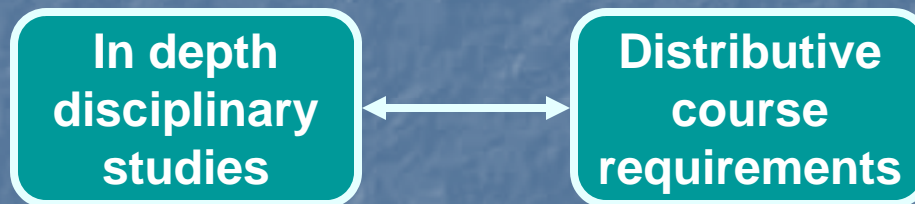
All learning is general



# Changing Designs for University Education

## The 20<sup>th</sup> century university

breadth (general education) + depth (the major)



Often framed as a “distribution requirement” to assure breadth of study

Similar to City U’s OOD requirement

# Growing Dissatisfaction with 20<sup>th</sup> Century GE Programs

- **As the number of courses grows in a distributional models, the consistent achievement of program outcomes becomes more challenging.**
- **GE program works well for some students but leaves ‘holes’ in some students preparation**
- **Solution: Seek additional common experiences for students to assure consistent delivery of program outcomes – this ultimately aids in assessment of student learning outcomes as well**

# Changing Designs for University Education

## The 21<sup>st</sup> century “New Academy”

Rethinking goals and practices for a globally interconnected knowledge society

Seeks integration of knowledge, often through “core” experiences

GE permeates the boundaries of the disciplines and the major

Addresses the skills, knowledge and values of 21<sup>st</sup> century life-long learners

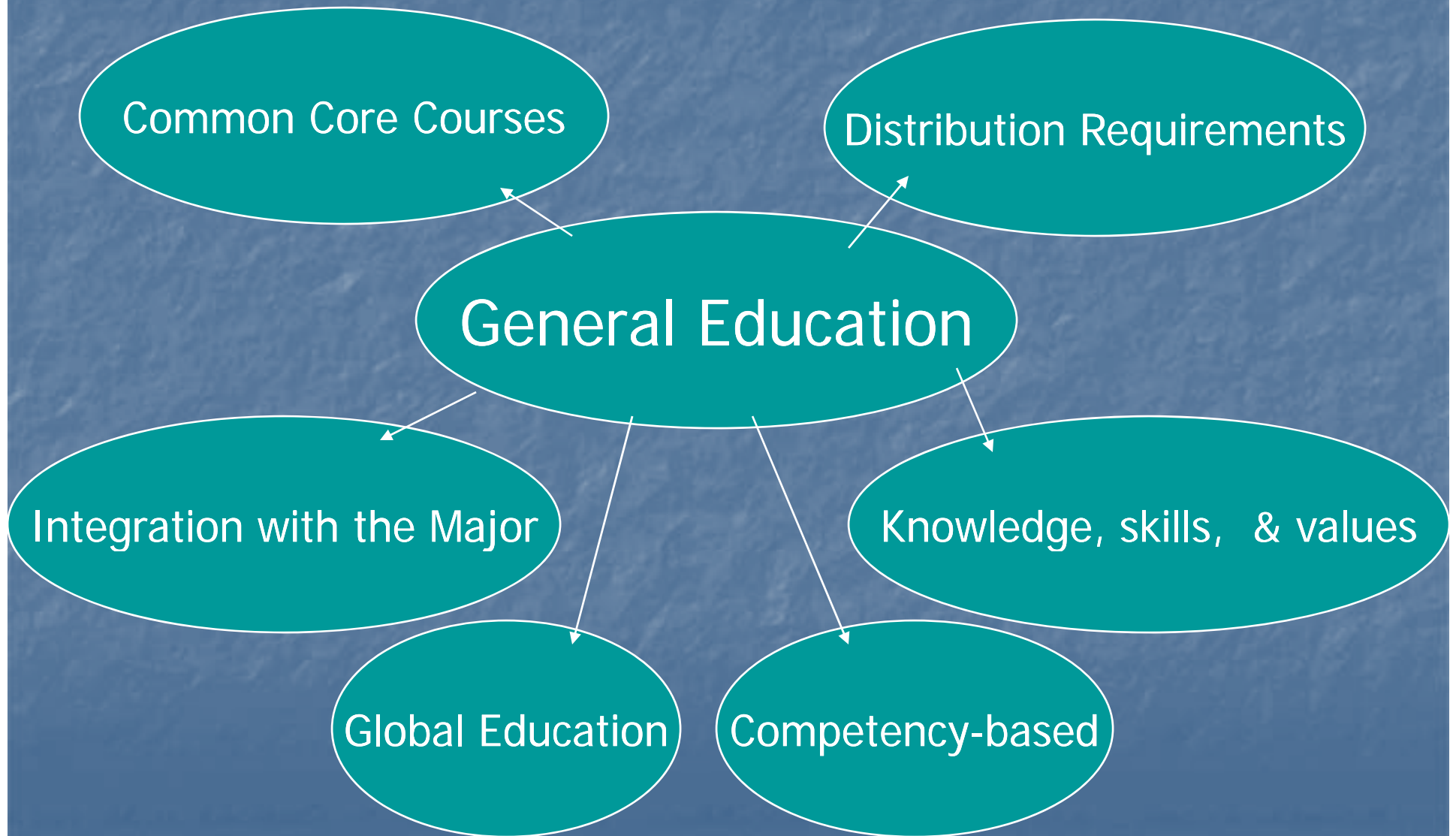
# Distribution vs. Core Curriculum

*"The one intolerable thing in education is the absence of intellectual design."* Mark van Doren

The goal of a Distribution requirement is breadth.

The goal of a Core curriculum is integration.

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century University Education



# Common Features of Cutting Edge GE Programs

Program Characteristics  
and  
Program Outcomes

# Characteristics of Effective GE Programs

- Purposeful
- Coherent
- Engaging
- Rigorous
- Extends through all 4 years of study
- Has good leadership from faculty and administration
- Is a corporate responsibility of the faculty
- Enjoys sufficient resources to achieve its purposes

(Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree, AAC&U, 2004)



# Intentional General Education Programs

- clear learning goals and outcomes
- tight link to institutional mission
- clear programmatic goals
  - a GE program is NOT a series of independent courses where students are left to make the 'connections'

# Good Practices in GE derived from Educational Research

- Give special attention to the early years
  - Instilling a thirst for inquiry and reflection “early on” will set the stage for more rapid growth, development, and educational attainment
- Create active learning experiences
  - Research clearly demonstrated that students who are engaged in their studies learn more
- Plan collaborative learning experiences
  - Students are affirmed in their learning by their peers support, criticism, and collaboration. Collaborative learning promotes behavior expected after university study, in the workplace.

# Common GE Program Outcomes

- Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural World
- Intellectual and Practical Skills
- Individual and Social Responsibility
- Integrative Learning

Liberal Education and America's Promise, 2008

[https://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/GlobalCentury\\_ExecSum\\_3.pdf](https://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/GlobalCentury_ExecSum_3.pdf)

# Alignment with CityU's Ideal Graduate Outcomes

- Apply effective communication, language, numerical, and IT skills to a variety of professional settings
- Apply multi-disciplinary critical thinking skills to solve problems and create new ideas
- Relate cultural awareness to collaborate effectively in a broad range of teamwork situations
- Generate a positive and flexible approach to lifelong learning and employability
- Reflect on the ethical and social responsibilities required of professional citizens in a global society

# Alignment with CityU's Approved GE Outcomes

- apply intellectual and practical skills to learning
- relate to diversity in terms of people and cultures
- apply a broader knowledge of the natural and physical world to their own experiences
- generate the capacity to assume individual and social responsibilities
- generate the capacity for lifelong learning

# Alignment of Program Outcomes with 'Best Practices'

	CityU Graduate Outcomes	CityU GE Outcomes
Knowledge of Culture & Natural World		
Intellectual & Practical Skills		
Individual & Social Responsibility		
Integrative Learning		

# Effective Practices for Implementation of GE Programs

# Key Implementation Principles

- Intentional Integration in Learning
- Developmental view of student learning
- Actively engaging of students
- Alignment



# Integration of Learning in GE Programs

- Across the curriculum and traditional disciplinary boundaries
- Between the curriculum and co-curriculum
- Across the GE program courses and courses in the major
- Skills, knowledge and values integration
- Social, personal, academic, and experiential integration (whole person development)

# A Developmental View of Student Learning

- GE introduces foundational knowledge and skills needed for disciplinary study
- Those skills are reinforced, advanced, and refined within the major
- The process of gaining mastery in a discipline is itself a transferable general education skill

# A Developmental Model for GE Programs

Foundational  
Courses

Focused Studies  
(Major & Minor)

Advanced Integrative  
& Culminating Work  
(Capstone)

Knowledge of Human Culture  
and the Natural World

Intellectual and Practical Skills

Individual and Social  
Responsibility

Integrative Learning


# Active Engagement of Students

- General Education Programs depend as heavily on the pedagogies used as on the content delivered to achieve intended student learning outcomes

# What Really Matters in University Study: Student Engagement

- Because individual effort and involvement are the critical determinants of impact, institutions should focus on the ways they can shape their academic, interpersonal, and co-curricular offerings to encourage *student engagement*.

# Foundations of Student Engagement

Time on task (Tyler, 1930s)

Quality of effort (Pace, 1960-70s)

Student involvement (Astin, 1984)

Social, academic integration  
(Tinto, 1987, 1993)

Good practices in undergraduate  
education (Chickering & Gamson,  
1987)

Student engagement (Kuh, 1991,  
2005)



# Effective Educational Practices

- First year experiences
- Common intellectual experiences
- Learning communities\*
- Writing intensive courses
- Collaborative assignments and projects
- Diversity/Global learning
- Service learning, community-based learning
- Undergraduate Research\*
- Internships\*
- Capstone courses and projects\*
- Study Abroad\*

College Learning for the New Global Century: A Report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise, AAC&U, 2007

[http://www.aacu.org/advocacy/leap/documents/GlobalCentury\\_final.pdf](http://www.aacu.org/advocacy/leap/documents/GlobalCentury_final.pdf)

High Impact Activities as reported in NSSE 2007 Report, Experiences that Matter: Enhancing Student Learning and Success, 2008  
Purposeful Pathways: Helping Student Achieve Key Learning Outcomes, AAC&U, 2006

# Alignment in GE Programs

- Pedagogy
  - The way one teaches
- Content
  - What one teaches
- Curriculum
  - How the content is organized across the program
- Assessment
  - How to examine student learning
- How One Supports Learning (co-curriculum)



Conclusions:

Some Radical Ideas for  
Consideration

# Conclusions

- General Education Programs, when well designed and implemented, are **equally as important as studies in the major**
- Good design involves developing a shared understanding of the purposes and desired outcomes of GE programs as well as careful decision making regarding pedagogies and content
  - Integrative and/or interdisciplinary studies
  - Developmental approach to scaffold higher achievement
  - Pedagogies that foster active student engagement
  - Alignment of the overall curriculum/co-curriculum, pedagogy, content, and assessment for improvement

# Upcoming Professional Development Opportunities

- STEP 3 - Progress Report on City University's GE Programme Implementation
  - Speaker: Professor A. Reza Hoshmand
  - Date: 21 October, 12:30pm - 2:30pm, Venue: Room N, CSC
- STEP 4 - Faculty Perspectives on General Education (GE) Course Development
  - Speakers: Professor Robert Li (FSE), Professor Graeme Lang (AIS), Dr Ron Kwok (IS), & Dr Carmencita Cheung (MEEM)
  - Date: 28 October, 12:30- 2:30pm, Venue: Room N, CSC
- GE Lunchtime Discussions
  - 5 November, 12:30-2:30 pm, Venue: Staff Lounge
  - 19 November, 12:30-2:30pm, Venue: Staff Lounge
- Workshops to assist with Course Proposal Development
  - Conceptualizing and Designing GE Classes
    - 3 December, 12:30-4:00pm, Venue: G5217
  - Assessment and Pedagogies in GE Classes
    - Early February, 2009, Venue: TBD

# Contact Information

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Please feel free to call or email if you'd like to discuss any of the ideas presented today, if you'd like me to speak to your department or faculty, or if you'd like to consult with me about a course proposal for the GE Program.

# References

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