Today

- UND and NIU: general education
  - What changed & what’s changing
- Making the most of GE: why?
- A few “lessons learned” from our work
NIU
• 21,000 students
• 16,000 UGs
  – 22.6 avg. age
  – Frosh ACT: 21.8
  – Primarily residential
  – ~45% transfer (F12)
• 7 colleges; 6 UG
• IBHE (12 universities)
  – Articulation Initiative (IAI)

UND
• 15,000 students
• 11,500 UGs
  – Traditional age (22.8 avg.)
  – Frosh ACT: 23.6
  – Residential
  – ~40% transfer
• 8 colleges; 7 UG
• Flagship campus
• NDUS (11)
  – GERTA
• NDGE Council (19)
**Program Development Milestones**

**NIU**

- **GE foundation**
  - NIU Strategic Plan May07
  - Curr. Innovations TF Spr08
  - New BA/BS outcomes Aug12

- **GE revision: 2013-14**
  - GEVTF Jan13
  - *GE Symposium Jan14*

- **“NIU Plus”**
  - Transition work
  - Launch

**UND**

- **AAC&U GE Institute: 2004**
- **GE revision: 2005-07**
- **“Essential Studies” launched 2008**
  - Capstones & 1st grads under ES: Spr11
  - Course revalidation cycle: 2009/12
  - Scoring session assessments 2011-14
  - ES program review: Spr14
Essential Studies: What changed?

- Distribution requirement modified
- Learning in *Special Emphases* added
- Goals revised for better understanding and assessment
- New name: Essential Studies
- Program administration added
ES: curriculum revisions

• new “Special Emphasis” requirements
  – Advanced communication
  – Oral communication
  – US diversity
  – Global diversity
  – Quantitative reasoning

• ES capstone (2 ES goals)

• “One goal rule” per ES course

• Courses can be offered & housed anywhere—if approved (ES committee)
Why the changes at UND?

• **Discouragement**: students’ experience in GE (GE Longitudinal Study): shallow, low impact

• **Dissatisfaction**: instructors’ awareness of GE purposes (GER Committee): lack of understanding and know-how

• **Criticism**: campus culture of assessment--student learning (HLC Accreditation): woeful lack of direct evidence
NIU & GE: ideas, direction, challenges

• Integrate GE into majors & co-curriculum
• Help improve completion & retention
• Link GE and baccalaureate outcomes
• Revise the GE curriculum
  – Writing
  – Breadth of knowledge
  – Teaching
  – Flexibility
Why do GE work?

1. Improve student learning

1. Tighten connection between students (and campus) and the real world

1. Make us better
Making the Most of GE: Why #1?

To improve student learning
Why Improve Student Learning?

- All students – not just the “good” ones
- Proficiency -- not exposure or initial success
  - The effort problem
- Demonstrated learning – not seat time
Improve learning: We have the tools

• Consensus “Essential Learning Outcomes”

Liberal Education & America’s Promise

Excellence for Everyone as a Nation Goes to College
Essential Learning Outcomes

• **Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**
  ➔ Focused on engagement with big questions, enduring and contemporary

• **Intellectual and Practical Skills**
  ➔ Practiced extensively across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

• **Personal and Social Responsibility**
  ➔ Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

• **Integrative Learning**
  ➔ Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems
Improve learning: more tools

• High Impact Practices (HIPs)
  ✓ NSSE results: learning & HIPs (G. Kuh, 2008)
  ✓ 5 HIPs research (Brownell & Swaner, 2010)
  ✓ Scaling up HIPs (Kuh & O’Donnell, 2013)
  ✓ Underserved students (Finley & McNair, 2013)
High-Impact Practices

- First-Year Seminars and Experiences
- Common Intellectual Experiences
- Learning Communities
- Writing-Intensive Courses
- Collaborative Assignments and Projects
- Assessment That Deepens Learning
- Undergraduate Research
- Diversity/Global Learning
- Service Learning, Community-Based Learning
- Internships
- Capstone Courses and Projects
HIPs: Making Excellence Inclusive
Percentage Graduating "On Time" (i.e., in 2006-07)

Latina/o Respondents

None | 1 HIP | 2 HIPs | 3 or more HIPs
---|---|---|---
38% | 65% | 73% |

V = .255 (.007)

Other Respondents

None | 1 HIP | 2 HIPs | 3 or more HIPs
---|---|---|---
48% | 54% | 63% | 68% |

V = .109 (.094)

Source: *Does Participation in Multiple High Impact Practices Affect Student Success at Cal State Northridge?* by Bettina Huber (leap.aacu.org/toolkit).
Improve learning: still more tools

• **Assessment methods**
  – To look for evidence of learning
  – To tell true stories about learning that occurred

✓ VALUE rubrics
✓ AGLS assessment project (Nichols, ed., *Judgments of Quality*, 2013)
✓ Campus “scoring sessions”
Why improve student learning?

“In a turbulent economy . . . awash in change, where the combination of inventiveness and judgment is the key to any organization’s future, the most practical possible education is one that prepares students to make sense of that complexity, to chart a course of action that takes full account of context, to engage in continuous learning, and to take responsibility for the quality and integrity of what they do.”

(Carol Geary-Schneider, 2009)
Quality GE programs connect students and the campus with the real world.
Connections that matter

- Students and work
- Students and community service
- Campus and the economy
The application of an education

• How do we know if the education we provide makes a difference?

“In my estimation, at NIU, the one thing we need to focus on is student CAREER success...” Pres. Baker, Dec13.

– Internships
– Business mentorships
– International experiences
The old GE...

• “Disinterested” learning

• Studies in GE are “for their own sake”
  – Disconnected from work, career
The “new” GE and employers
It Takes More Than A Major:

Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success

Key findings from a survey among 318 employers Conducted January 9 – 13, 2013 for the Association of American Colleges and Universities
Innovation is a priority for employers, and they report that the challenges their employees face today are more complex and require a broader skill set than in the past.

Employers recognize capacities that cut across majors as critical to a candidate’s potential for career success, and they view these skills as more important than a student’s choice of undergraduate major.

Employers recognize the importance of a liberal education and the liberal arts. The majority agree that having both field-specific knowledge and skills and a broad range of skills and knowledge is most important for long-term career success.

Employers endorse education practices that involve students in active, effortful work and the application of skills.

Employers express interest in e-portfolios and partnerships with colleges to ensure college graduates’ successful transition to the workplace.
Our company puts a priority on hiring people with the intellectual and interpersonal skills that will help them contribute to innovation in the workplace.

Candidates’ demonstrated capacity to think critically, communicate clearly, & solve complex problems is more important than their undergraduate major.

Our company is asking employees to take on more responsibilities and to use a broader set of skills than in the past.

Innovation is essential to our company/organization’s continued success.

The challenges employees face within our company are more complex today than they were in the past.

Employers’ consensus: What’s needed for workplace challenges and complexity...

- Strongly agree with this statement about employees/future hires
  - 57%
  - 95%

- Somewhat agree
  - 59%
  - 93%

- 52%
  - 93%

- Innovation is essential to our company/organization’s continued success
  - 51%
  - 92%

- The challenges employees face within our company are more complex today than they were in the past
  - 50%
  - 91%
Majorities of employers want colleges to place emphasis on GE outcomes.

- Knowledge of science and technology: 56% more emphasis than today, 35% the same, 9% less.
- Ability to work with numbers and understand statistics: 55% more emphasis than today, 35% the same, 10% less.
- Proficiency in a language other than English: 43% more emphasis than today, 39% the same, 18% less.
- Knowledge of global issues & implications: 40% more emphasis than today, 45% the same, 15% less.
- Knowledge of U.S. role in world: 35% more emphasis than today, 47% the same, 18% less.
- Knowledge of cultural diversity: 33% more emphasis than today, 45% the same, 22% less.
- Civic knowledge/participation, community engagement: 30% more emphasis than today, 52% the same, 18% less.
- Knowledge of democratic institutions & values: 27% more emphasis than today, 53% the same, 20% less.

Majorities of employers want colleges to place more emphasis on general education (GE) outcomes.
Does that mean…?"

- The campus and the career are hand-in-glove?
  - Work—productive, smart use
  - University—learn, expand, grow
Good learning works
Making the Most of our GE Programs: Why #3

GE work can help make us better.
Today’s big problems are growing in complexity almost faster than we can keep pace. Solving them requires diligence, doing right, and ingenuity—Atul Gawande, *Better* (2007).
Complexity in GE: program size
ES at UND: 11,024 students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Largest program areas</th>
<th>Largest College—UG students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Health professions – 1,858</td>
<td>• A&amp;S – 3,143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Aviation – 1,553</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Engineering (all) – 1,552</td>
<td>✓ “College” of ES = 3.5x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Business (all) – 1,481</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Undeclared – 900</td>
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✓ ES = 6x larger
Complex work

- Making systems work in medicine is the great task of my generation of physicians and sciences. In fact, it’s the great task of our generation in all fields.

- Knowledge [general education?] has become too complex to handle as individuals which means that, as individualistic as we want to be, complexity requires group success.

✓ “We all need to be pit crews now.”

--A. Gawande (TED Talk, Feb 2012)
GE & university structural challenges

- Departments & disciplines
- My course & my students
- T&P – individual, original work

→ Learning outcomes and cross-unit teams
→ Our program & our students
→ Recognition & rewards: teamwork & best practices

---Barr & Tagg, *From Teaching to Learning*, 1995
Assessment work

• Brings faculty/staff together
• Work cuts across units
• Results are “share-able”

✓ The best assessments tell us something we did not know before (JMU)
Signature assignments

• **Performance tasks**
  – Apply knowledge to real world problem
  – Uses multiple sources of information
  – “Answerable” by all UG students across the campus/disciplines

• **Aligned with GE learning outcomes**

• **Assessed by cross-unit faculty teams**

• **Results shared with instructors and students (“close the loop”)**
Connecting to others

Learning from other institutions – makes our team bigger and smarter

• NIU and UND

✓ Portland State U
✓ James Madison U
The “new” GE looks different

Sharpening our vision can help reduce complexity...or at least deal with it.
Envisioning GE: Old Version

GE as the foundation--It comes first and provides a broad base. Then students build “upward” to their major and their specialty work--the peak of their studies.
Envisioning the “New” GE

• Academic partnership

• GE and the specialty studies—teaming together.

• Both parts...
  – Foundational skills, knowledge
  – Extend over time
  – Refine & apply
UG Experience: Two Pillars

- GE and the major
- Reinforced learning
- Culminating capstone
UND: a few take-aways

• Caution: we’re still learning ....
GE Development Process

• Process may be just as important as program result (Kantor et. al., 1997)

• “Our ES curriculum is a work in progress.... “ (Anne Kelsch, UND)
Going forward

• “All our discussions have to start with putting some information [data] on the table.” (Karen Schilling, GenEd Institute)

• “We want every assessment to be meaningful and to make sense to the people looking at it--us.” (Joan Hawthorne, UND)

  • home-grown rubrics for GE outcomes
  • “Assessment Week” in ES Capstones
What’s next?: Essential Studies

- Make more use of assessment results
- Re-examine transferability and special emphasis courses
  - new GERTA
- Help students integrate learning across ES courses
  - Teaching like a team
- Track *High Impact Practices* (HIPs) & student success
- Keep aiming at quality of learning
What’s next? NIU

NIU Plus?
The “New” General Education

1. **Vision**: GE + Major = Quality UG experience
2. **Aim**: what students can & should learn
3. **Use**: Essential Learning Outcomes
4. **Grow**: High Impact Teaching/Learning
5. **Do**: Assessment that matters
Parting thoughts—Gawande’s

✓ ...the places that function most like a system are the most successful.

1. you must acquire an ability to recognize when you’ve succeeded and when you’ve failed.
2. you must grow an ability to devise solutions for the system problems that data and experience uncover.
3. you must have--but haven’t been taught—the ability to implement at scale, the ability to get colleagues along the entire chain ... functioning like pit crews.