

## Practices in Transforming General Education: Integrating Essential Skills in the Faculty Planning and Curricular Coherence Pilot Project and Beyond at Community College of Philadelphia

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This practice article describes the goals, strategies, and outcomes of a pilot project that grew out of the Purposeful Pathways: Faculty Planning for Curricular Coherence project, funded by the Teagle Foundation, at Community College of Philadelphia. Included are recommendations for creating and supporting sustainable multidisciplinary faculty-driven leadership in order to achieve larger curricular goals. The pilot project integrates guided pathways (Jenkins, Brown, Fink, Lahr, & Yanagiura, 2018) with the essential skills of general education through the creation of academic pathway outcomes, and in doing so, codifies a collaborative process of faculty engagement. The practice draws from integrative learning and leadership-as-practice and aims for a full-scale transformation of general education that clarifies how knowledge and skills develop over time, across programs, and through academic pathways, empowering students and faculty to articulate and reinforce the connections between those skills and students' transfer and career goals.

### Background

Conversations and practices around curricular coherence often occur at multiple levels simultaneously: (a) the institutional level (e.g., restructuring, extended advising, placement changes), (b) the program level (e.g., program maps, changes to course sequencing, program outcome revisions), and/or (c) within individual courses (e.g., first-year experience, contextualized learning, accelerated learning). Although these practices share the objective of increasing graduation rates and other measures of student success, the involvement of multiple constituents in this multi-tiered structure can make collaborative interdisciplinary faculty work more difficult.

Community College of Philadelphia has implemented a leadership model (informed by leadership-as-practice) that has increased faculty engagement in and ownership of general education and enables a faculty-driven, multidisciplinary process of revising general education that is an intentional integrative learning practice for both faculty and students. In this article, we describe the goals, strategies, and outcomes of the pilot project that grew out of the Teagle Foundation Purposeful Pathways: Faculty Planning for Curricular Coherence project and make recommendations for creating and supporting sustainable multidisciplinary faculty-driven leadership to achieve larger curricular goals.

### Background and Institutional Context: Community College of Philadelphia

Community College of Philadelphia (CCP), currently serving approximately 17,000 students mostly from intersectional underserved groups, is one of more than 250 community colleges involved in guided pathways initiatives (Jenkins, Lahr, Fink, & Ganga,

2018). CCP has been involved in the American Association of Community Colleges Pathways Project since 2015. In 2017, CCP developed seven academic pathways that encompass 70+ programs and certificates. CCP implemented full-scale guided pathways in Spring 2018, enacting multiple initiatives to support the implementation. For example, each degree program developed default program maps (Jenkins, Lahr et al., 2018) for students working at college level and those enrolled in developmental education courses. CCP increased the number of dedicated full-time advisors, inaugurated and expanded first-year experience courses, and put greater emphasis on accelerated and contextualized learning (Hirsch, n.d.).

Faculty efforts to develop program maps and to initiate and sustain productive conversations about matters such as clarity and consistency (guidelines, definitions, communication), access to information, and flexibility while providing guided choices, resulted in several members of the faculty looking for more formalized faculty interaction across their disciplinary and institutional silos. This desire led CCP faculty to form the Cross-Divisional Curriculum Planning Group (CDCP) in the summer of 2017. In its early permutation, the CDCP conducted several meetings with faculty from all over the college community, including educational support services such as advising, counseling, library, and learning lab. These meetings were held to share questions and concerns, educate one another about our work and how it affects students, and make recommendations to the college community.

The implementation process revealed that existing general education requirements might pose obstacles to the creation of structured pathways, which highlighted the need for collaborative faculty work to inform and transform general education (Hill, Kim, & Lagueux, 2007); however, barriers existed. Feedback from faculty suggested that these

barriers partly involved the perception that a few disciplines had dominated general education's definitions and structure in the past, amplifying the silo effect. The need for greater clarity was another barrier, as faculty and students found the various layers of general education requirements difficult to navigate and reported thinking about general education experience as something more like "checking boxes" than about skills that are essential to student success. Added to that, more than two years of contract negotiations at CCP put some strain on faculty/administrator relationships, further complicating the creation of an intentional and sustainable collaborative faculty process. Ultimately, these barriers to collaborative work may affect student persistence, particularly if both faculty and students do not clearly understand (or cannot clearly communicate) the "why" along with the "what" of general education.

At the same time the CDCP was forming, CCP became part of the Teagle Foundation Purposeful Pathways: Faculty Planning for Curricular Coherence initiative, which supported the efforts of the CDCP and spawned the Teagle Pilot Project at the college. The Teagle Pilot Project evolved from 2017 to 2020 to include aligning general education requirements with existing academic pathways, streamlining those requirements, and creating assessment methods for general education that emphasize interdisciplinary collaboration and intentional learning. This kind of work requires a great deal of collaboration among faculty from across the disciplines. Teagle funding provided small stipends for faculty engaged in this integration effort and supported several Academic Pathway Outcome (APO) workshops in which faculty leaders in a given pathway collaborate to (a) identify areas for in-depth coverage of the essential skills of general education; (b) determine which foundational and program courses introduce and reinforce those skills through an ongoing process of alignment and assessment; and (c) collaborate with faculty who teach foundational skills to track and discuss how students develop those skills over time in courses, through programs, across pathways, and into their academic and work lives.

### Literature Review

Two areas of scholarship—integrative learning and leadership-as-practice—inform the planning, strategies, and the leadership model that we have employed in order to meet our goals.

#### Integrative Learning

Integrative learning is a key theoretical framework for the project, involving both the restructuring and alignment of general education requirements with a focus on skills and practical approaches to facilitating

collaborative faculty work. The recent National Academies (2018) consensus study report, "The Integration of the Humanities and Arts with Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine in Higher Education: Branches from the Same Tree," presented the definition of integrative learning as,

the demonstrated ability to connect, apply, and/or synthesize information coherently from disparate contexts and perspectives, and make use of these new insights in multiple contexts. This includes the ability to connect the domain of ideas and philosophies to the everyday experience, from one field of study or discipline to another, from the past to the present, between campus and community life, from one part to the whole, from the abstract to the concrete, among multiple identity roles—and vice versa. (Barber, 2012 as cited in National Academies, 2018, p. 81)

The National Academies report also noted that because of the breadth and variation the integrative learning concept, a "singular, universally applicable definition of integration is difficult to achieve" (p. 172) and identified barriers to integration in higher education, such as "rigid professional identities" (p. 174) and negative professional consequences. The integrated learning framework, applicable to both student learning and collaborative faculty work, presents particular challenges for CCP faculty but offers great potential for an improved student experience within and beyond the classroom (National Academies, 2018) and helps to create community among faculty with a range of academic backgrounds and institutional experience. Integrative learning can help to bring together fragmented ideas within and between curricula and fragmented groups within a college community. Connecting ideas to real-world problems in different contexts is a fundamental aspect of intentional learning, helping faculty to clarify coherent pathways and respond more effectively to the "whole" student (Huber & Hutchings, 2004). Ferren and Paris' (2015) Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) publication, "Faculty Leadership for Integrative Liberal Learning," an early influence on our project, noted that faculty leadership grounded in integrative learning works well to facilitate collaborative practice and serves as a model for student learning:

Collaborative faculty leadership is central to effective integrative liberal learning. When faculty related to each other as colleagues and collaborators rather than in hierarchical and department-bound relationships, it is easier to model for students the connections across courses,

disciplines, and ideas. Faculty members who are willing to try new things are well suited to guide both colleagues and students in projects that make connections beyond the classroom and embrace multiple perspectives. (Ferren & Paris, 2015, p. 11)

Integrative learning is beneficial for students who are connecting classroom, real life experiences, and goals as well as for faculty who are working across disciplines to accomplish larger curricular goals.

### **Leadership-as-Practice**

*Leadership-as-practice*, simply put, is the idea that leadership is not who you are but what you do. It is grounded in an anti-oppression philosophy of practice that creates meaning through the dynamic process rather than investing leadership in the characteristics or position of the individual (Raelin, 2017). Ferren and Parris' (2015) call for change, "to develop, extend, and sustain integrative liberal learning requires not only careful design of learning experiences, but also a reshaping of institutional relationships and infrastructure" (p. 11), dovetails with the theory at the core of leadership-as-practice, a "commitment to release leadership from a role-driven, entitative influence relationship" that "may have a better chance to resist oppression and other forms of inequitable social arrangements" (Raelin, 2017, p. 217). This anti-hierarchical approach is particularly well suited to a large urban community college that serves mostly people of color, that is working to improve its equity outcomes (Community College of Philadelphia, n.d.), and that offers the Diversity Certificate, which is comprised of workshops and dialogues on diversity that create space for difficult discussions that can increase the cultural competence of faculty, staff, and administration (Oates-Primus & Allard, n.d.). CCP's flexible facilitator leadership model, which best describes our leadership practice, draws from leadership-as-practice but adapts it to our particular environment, faculty, and task, and is characterized by the purposeful diffusion of the existing hierarchical structures (e.g., inviting the entire faculty to participate in the CDCP Summer Institutes or purposefully shutting down and reconstituting the General Education Task Force [GETF] every semester). Leadership-as-practice is evident in practices that have evolved during our general education such as building capacity through intentional recruitment of diverse faculty, working in small groups but reporting out to the larger group for feedback, or designing meeting schedules that engage with a core group yet enable a larger cross-section of faculty to engage across disciplines.

### **Achieving Integration and Coherence: Goals and Strategies**

In our attempt to effect a full-scale transformation of general education that empowers students and faculty to articulate and reinforce the connections between essential skills and students' transfer and career goals, we established several long-term goals for the pilot project and beyond, including: (a) simplifying general education requirements, (b) integrating general education with academic pathways, (c) identifying and evaluating essential skills content in courses to show alignment and skill development, (d) reducing the silo effect by facilitating cross-divisional faculty collaboration, and (e) increasing student and faculty awareness and ownership of general education.

To achieve these goals, we focused on making the general education revision process more interdisciplinary, faculty-driven, and intentional. To that end, we decided on a flexible facilitator leadership practice, took advantage of existing interdisciplinary and cross-divisional faculty-driven structures, moved the focus of general education away from disciplines and toward essential skills, formed a bridge between general education skills and general education requirements, and assessed and monitored faculty concerns.

#### **Strategy 1: Flexible Facilitator Leadership**

Once we knew that achieving our goal meant accomplishing a large-scale task in which a large number of diverse faculty with challenging teaching schedules must work together, work effectively, and meet deadlines, we realized that we needed a leadership practice that could meet those diverse needs and evolve with the work. Faculty leadership at CCP most often derives from existing hierarchical structures (e.g., department heads, program coordinators, course leaders). Few faculty within this hierarchical structure have the time, space, and flexibility in their schedules to take up leadership of large-scale interdisciplinary work due to demanding workloads and time spent on course scheduling and managing interpersonal challenges. To ameliorate this, we settled on a leadership practice that is grounded in facilitation and practice rather than hierarchy. The facilitator model was already evident and successful in the area of curriculum development at CCP, and we recognized that an existing faculty position—the Coordinator of Curriculum Development—was particularly well situated to perform as a facilitator for faculty across disciplines. The coordinator is a full-time faculty position but not a teaching position, which also allowed that leader/facilitator to (a) approach interdisciplinary work from a more "bird's-eye" view, (b) bring faculty

together with less appearance of favoritism, and (c) create materials for the larger group to share, discuss, and transform into a workable framework. Although we began with an individual/small group leadership structure, that structure evolved into a more dynamic shared group practice as we facilitated the growth and development of the General Education Task Force.

### **Strategy 2: Focusing the Cross-Divisional Curriculum Planning Group**

Once we established the revision of general education as our primary purpose, we shifted the focus of the fledgling Cross-Divisional Curriculum Planning Group (CDCP) from guided pathways implementation to general education. We recognized that general education was at the heart of the CDCP's initial development and intentionally moved the group's focus from broader cross-division concerns to attitudes about and ownership of general education. General education had been part of the CDCP's discussions early on because one of the initial curricular goals of guided pathways implementation was for several programs to provide default plans (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015) that often reduced the number of courses that meet general education requirements from broad, open-ended lists of disciplines to three or fewer course options. For most department heads and program coordinators tasked with this, that involved choosing courses outside their own disciplines. Many based those choices on past course-taking patterns, course descriptions, and informal communications with fellow faculty. For others, particularly those interested in making meaningful and informed choices regarding general education courses outside their own disciplines, a more formal process for cross-divisional interdisciplinary discussion and planning was welcome.

### **Strategy 3: Moving from Disciplines to Essential Skills**

One persistent challenge embedded in general education is its dual character. General education is at once about the greatest abstractions of human achievement (cultural literacy, oral communication, creative expression) and about the imminently practical: the boxes must be checked to ensure that students have completed all requirements for graduation or for transfer. Failure to check the right boxes may result in delays and excess credits. Community colleges must work at multiple levels with general education while implementing pathways initiatives to help students gain the skills they need and help them move forward on their career and academic paths (Harrington, 2019).

Our strategy in moving from disciplines to essential skills grew from several factors within and outside of the

institution. First, we needed to respond to changes to our regional accreditor's standards. In 2015, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE), CCP's accrediting body, published updated Standard III criteria that included six essential skills for general education. These skills included "at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, technological competency, and information literacy" and, "consistent with the mission, . . . the study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives" (MSCHE, 2020, p. 8). The strategic decision to wipe out the various layers of general education and focus on essential skills helped to keep the revision in line with our accreditor's expectations. The faculty settled on six essential skills: (a) oral communication/creative expression; (b) quantitative reasoning; (c) cultural analysis and interpretation; (d) scientific reasoning; (e) writing, research, and information literacy; and (f) technological competency.

Second, as part of our onboarding experience with the Teagle Foundation Faculty Planning and Curricular Coherence initiative, the Teagle project team from CCP attended the 2017 AAC&U Institute on Integrative Learning and Signature Work at Loyola University in Chicago, where we had immersive interactions with colleagues from other institutions who were part of AAC&U's General Education Maps and Markers (GEMs) initiative. The GEM's focus on integrative learning, clear learning outcomes, and transparency had a great impact on our decision making as we considered new frameworks for general education and informed the focus on skills (AAC&U, 2015).

Third, our prior experience with the implementation of academic pathways at CCP informed our work. In the spirit of integrative learning and reducing the silo effect, we realized any changes that we made to general education must be in alignment with the institution's seven academic pathways, an aspect of guided pathways that includes support systems such as dedicated academic advisors and pathway community facilitators. Academic pathways (with their support systems) constitute a student-centered approach that can reflect the whole of the student experience with the institution. Although students' work in programmatic courses and graduation with a terminal degree is almost by definition heavily focused on learning within a specific discipline, their college experience—including placement, first-year experience, general education, and both co-curricular and extracurricular activities—is not. The shift from disciplines to skills in general education is a more student-centered framework.

Feedback from faculty on earlier institutional change initiatives was critical to our thinking, as it informed our ideas regarding faculty engagement in this new process of general education reform. Although the CDCP's main focus at first was the implementation of

guided pathways (and, in particular, the production of program maps), general education emerged as an early topic of discussion. The move from disciplines to skills responded to frequent feedback from these early meetings that indicated confusion about the relationship between requirements and meaning in general education (see Appendix A). For example, among 160 faculty, staff, and administrators surveyed about CCP's general education curriculum in 2018, 41% said that they did not understand the connection between the general education requirements and the core competencies, and 83% believed that students did not understand the connection between general education requirements and degree completion (see Appendix B).

Last, we needed to address faculty members' decreased sense of ownership of or connection to general education processes. In prior discussions about general education, faculty often mentioned, with varying degrees of pique, the tendency of some disciplines to dominate the design of general education requirements and criteria, leaving other disciplines to report disconnects in both student preparedness for program courses that build on general education and between the general education definitions and criteria. Moving from disciplines to skills ensured that more faculty across the disciplines felt heard as we revised general education.

#### **Strategy 4: Forming a Bridge Between General Education Requirements and Skills Assessment: Essential Skills**

In order to ground our work in the student learning experience—including considering transfer requirements and focusing on the skills that employers identify as important—we formed seven sub-committees of the CDCP, one for each of the essential skills with an intentional emphasis on multidisciplinary participation. We charged each group with drafting a definition for their skill and then shared those definitions among all of the sub-committees working on essential skills definitions, faculty involved in the Teagle Foundation pilot project (APOs), and the General Education Task Force, which was working on requirements. The move from disciplines to essential skills enabled multiple perspectives and created a larger, collaborative space for considering both breadth and depth in general education.

Among other critical aspects of the general education revision work, CCP's participation in the Teagle Foundation's Faculty Planning for Curricular Coherence initiative was the springboard for a pilot project involving two of the seven academic pathways at the college. Members of the Teagle Project team met with faculty leadership in the Health Care pathway and the Liberal Arts and Communication pathway to engage

in structured collaborative workshops to review the essential skills, identify specific areas within those skills that their pathways and programs built upon in-depth, and determine both foundational and programmatic courses that introduce and reinforce those skills. The pilot project also began an ongoing process of alignment and assessment of the essential skills through the lens of the pathway with the creation of Academic Pathway Outcomes (APO). APOs work as a strategy for promoting curricular coherence in an institution that is already familiar with using outcomes for assessment at the course and program level, and they can help faculty who come from different departments and disciplines find common ground and help forge pathway identity. Our work on the pilot project promises to open several possibilities for designing “scalable, integrative approaches to assessment” (National Academies, 2018, p. 178).

In reorganizing courses under essential skills, we discovered an opportunity to address both breadth and depth in general education work while promoting curricular coherence. As we identify courses that meet the essential skills of general education, we may ensure that those courses give students a thorough foundation in the skill, which means we can establish a basis for breadth in that skill. Individual pathways' work with APOs then allows us to focus on the essential skills in depth and across disciplines. Intentional redundancy in the makeup of these groups keeps these two areas connected and provides greater coherence overall.

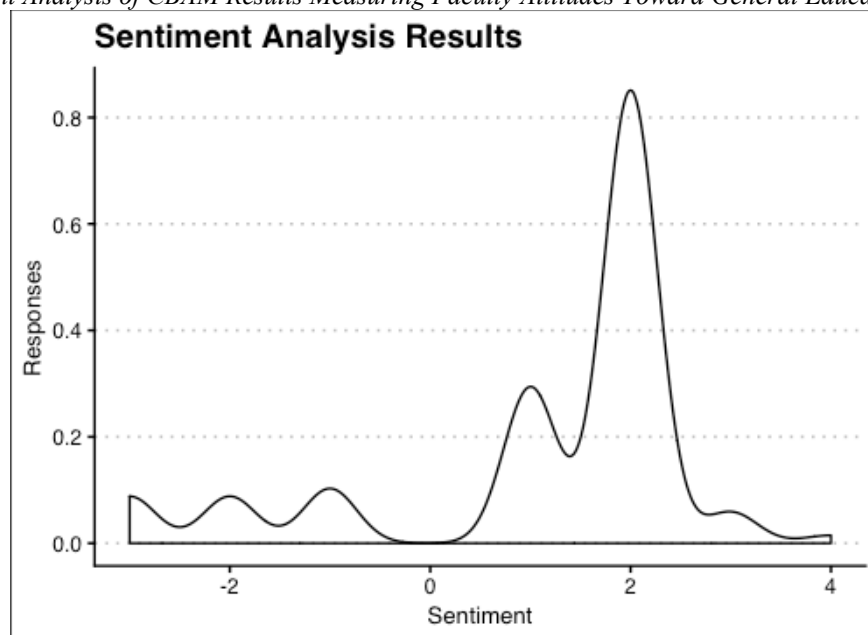
#### **Strategy 5: Keeping Track of Faculty Concerns: Concerns-Based Adoption Model**

In the midst of large-scale curricular reform at any higher education institution, faculty will exhibit varying levels of concern regarding how those reforms will affect students' lives and achievements, the flow of existing policies and procedures, and their own livelihoods. We used the Concerns-Based Adoption Model (CBAM) because we wished to “pay attention to individuals and their various needs for information, assistance, and moral support” (Loucks-Horsley, 1996). Using the CBAM in a variety of collaborative spaces that have general education in common and tailoring it for different audiences and tasks allowed us to keep track of faculty concerns but also enabled leadership to respond in a more thoughtful way to those concerns when creating materials and opportunities for further collaboration (see Appendix C).

#### **Project Outcomes**

To date, we have identified and defined six essential skills for general education that govern our work in both general education assessment and degree

Figure 1  
*Sentiment Analysis of CBAM Results Measuring Faculty Attitudes Toward General Education Work*



requirements: (a) oral communication/creative expression; (b) quantitative reasoning; (c) scientific reasoning; (d) technological competency; (e) cultural analysis and interpretation; and (f) writing, research, and information literacy. The technological competency definition was approved institution-wide in March 2019, and the remaining essential skills definitions have been reviewed by stakeholders and are slated to begin the approval process in March 2020. We have created a working model for meeting general education requirements that forms the basis for upcoming student, faculty, and employer focus groups and surveys and that were finalized in the Spring of 2020.

Additionally, two pathways in the Teagle pilot project have developed a series of APOs that help pathways focus on areas of depth for the essential skills of general education. As this is an ongoing process, it is informed by the work of the GETF. The work to scale up from two pathways to all seven has already begun, and the essential skills-APO-PLO-CLO-course alignment project began the approval process in the spring of 2020.

We also have seen a shift in faculty sentiment, particularly regarding ownership and knowledge of general education, as more faculty have participated in the general education work. This can be seen in the results of our faculty perceptions survey work. We conducted a “sentiment analysis” with the CBAM that indicates positive attitudes among faculty. Sentiment analysis assigns words with a score that runs between -5 and 5, with negative scores indicating negative sentiment

and positive scores indicating positive sentiment. These scores are normalized across the CBAM questionnaires as well as within the questionnaires. Figure 1 displays the normalized scores produced from the sentiment analysis.

As illustrated by the skewed-left distribution of the sentiment scores in Figure 1, a majority of responses indicated a generally positive sentiment toward the general education revision process with the bulk of observations (which, in sentiment analysis, are words) around a standardized score of 2. In contrast to the results in Figure 1, the attitudes of faculty toward the current state of general education at the College displayed in Table 1—which are the results of a Kahoot survey administered prior to many of the general education meetings—represents a far greater split in attitude toward the state of general education. For example, while 90% of respondents agreed that it was important to be knowledgeable of CCP’s general education requirements, 39% of respondents admitted they were not knowledgeable about CCP’s general education requirements. Additionally, 62% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that students did not understand the connection between general education and degree completion.

Admittedly, a limitation of the data presented is that the post-workshop sentiment analysis is not directly comparable to the survey administered at CCP’s professional development session. Not only are these groups made up of different individuals, the group that completed the CBAM also did so

Table 1

*Results of Kahoot During Professional Development Surveying Faculty Attitudes Toward General Education (August 2018)*

Item	Response	No. of responses	% of responses
I am not knowledgeable about CCP's gen ed requirements.	I agree	41	32%
	I disagree	48	38%
	I strongly agree	9	7%
	I strongly disagree	30	23%
	Response rate	130	95.6%
I do NOT understand the connection between major academic approaches and core competencies.	I agree	43	33%
	I disagree	45	35%
	I strongly agree	9	7%
	I strongly disagree	33	25%
	Response rate	130	95.6%
It is important that I am knowledgeable about CCP's general ed requirements.	I agree	56	42%
	I disagree	4	3%
	I strongly agree	64	48%
	I strongly disagree	9	7%
	Response rate	133	97.8%
CCP's core competencies reflect skills and knowledge students need when they leave the college.	I agree	63	50%
	I disagree	11	9%
	I strongly agree	41	33%
	I strongly disagree	11	9%
	Response rate	126	92.6%
Students do not understand the connection between gen ed and degree completion.	I agree	70	55%
	I disagree	13	10%
	I strongly agree	35	28%
	I strongly disagree	9	7%
	Response rate	127	93.4%

*Note.*  $n = 136$ .

after voluntarily attending a session on general education revision and therefore were more likely to be predisposed to have a more positive affect toward the revision, regardless of the process through which the revision took place. Despite this limitation, however, the data presented do indicate that there was a wide range of opinions regarding the current and future states of general education at CCP. While these descriptive CCP, the results of the sentiment analysis indicate that the participation of faculty in a faculty-driven process may lead to positive views on the processes themselves or increase the positive views of faculty who may have already held positive views on the process.

A critical project achievement was creating and codifying a sustainable structure that provided opportunities for cross-divisional work. The Cross-Divisional Curriculum Planning group lies at the center of a six-pod cluster of smaller groups and initiatives that have worked on the general education revision: (a) The CDCP steering committee, (b) the CDCP summer institutes, (c) the GETF, (d) the CDCP sub-committees, (e) the Teagle Foundation project team, and (f) the APO workshops. Intentional redundancy among the groups facilitates broad faculty engagement. Although some of this work is ad-hoc, the CDCP has institutional support and provides a sustainable opportunity for interdisciplinary faculty

collaboration across the disciplines. In our estimation, this has helped to broaden faculty engagement in the general education work in a fairly short period of time. A total of 93 members of the college community, including 90 faculty from 36 disciplines (representing more than 22% of fulltime faculty and 41% of disciplines) have participated in some aspect of the general education revision in the span of one year. Among these, the average number of events/sessions on general education that faculty attended was two, and 24 faculty attended three or more sessions. The move from disciplines to skills and using the skills to bridge general education requirements and general education skill development and assessment has the added bonus of reducing the silo effect in the spaces where cross-divisional collaboration occurs (e.g., conference rooms, classrooms, e-mail exchanges, shared documents, Outlook groups).

### Future Work

CCP is now in a much stronger position—both structurally and from a faculty engagement perspective—to meet our goal of scaling up the pilot project’s use of APOs, completing curricular revisions, and implementing the revised general education requirements by Fall 2021. To accomplish this work, we begin to focus more on student awareness and ownership of general education, as our work with students has lagged behind our work with faculty. One of our guiding principles has been that even if students cannot articulate how general education supports their career and educational goals, if faculty approach general education in a collaborative way and improve its coherence, then students will automatically benefit from this. This may not, however, increase student awareness and ownership of general education. To accomplish this goal, we are in the process of designing opportunities such as focus groups, dissemination strategies using multiple forms of media, work with Student Development, and creating student-facing materials that encourage them to think about how the essential skills of general education help them to attain their academic and career goals.

Another outgrowth of both the APO workshops and the GETF has been the desire to create additional collaborative spaces where faculty who teach foundational skills and those who teach program courses can discuss skills and share teaching methodologies. We held a faculty conference on the essential skills of general education during Fall 2020 professional development with the particular focus of transforming student learning by further integrating high-impact practices, creating more transparent assignments, and using more teamwork and problem solving in and outside the classroom to support the development of the essential skills. This dovetails well

with our institution’s turn toward the fourth practice area of guided pathways: ensuring that students are learning (Jenkins, Lahr et al., 2018a, p. 3).

The GETF is working out a process for reorganizing courses under the essential skills that includes defining criteria and deadlines, creating an accountability structure, and performing impact analysis by testing the revised general education requirements on transfer and applied degree programs. Once the essential skills, working model, and APOs are established, we will begin the work of course and program revision that promotes greater coherence and intentionality. Course and program revisions should begin summer 2020. Some of this work has already occurred, especially in the Health Care pathway.

### Recommendations to Other Institutions Embarking on a Curricular Change Initiative

Next are several recommendations for creating and supporting sustainable multidisciplinary faculty-driven leadership to achieve larger curricular goals. These include using or adapting the flexible facilitator leadership model, making interdisciplinary work intentional, emphasizing transparency, and creating community.

#### Recommendation 1: Enable Flexible Facilitator Leadership

The leadership model that we have developed to work through the project and meet our goals is based in the principles of integrative learning and informed by the model of leadership-as-practice. Our model incorporates a number of practical elements that may be of benefit to similar institutions and 4-year institutions. Although leadership-as-practice “does not rely on the attributes of individuals,” it does “privilege the value of social interactions” (Raelin, 2017, pp. 216-217), and we have found individual leadership to be valuable and effective in supporting collaborative work and accomplishing long-term goals as long as that leadership (a) has institutional support; (b) is grounded in multidisciplinary experience and practical flexibility; and (c) privileges collaborative work, intentionality, and transparency.

A key foundation for any leadership of this kind is the creation or promotion of a codified cross-divisional faculty group empowered to make change and a clearly defined process for the approval and dissemination of such changes. In a diverse multidisciplinary environment, it is also key that those who practice leadership have the opportunity to work across divisions and departments, with particular emphasis on curricular work, and can approach this work as facilitators rather than as experts. The lead author’s position as coordinator of curriculum development



allows for a larger-scale view of the curricular work of CCP. Other institutions interested in creating spaces for collaborative interdisciplinary faculty work might identify or create faculty positions that serve a similar “bigger picture” function.

It will also be useful to identify faculty leadership who, coming from a more institution-wide curricular perspective, can function as facilitators, bringing faculty together, guiding discussion, managing concerns, and keeping participants connected, informed, and focused. Even when there is intentional redundancy in the formation of collaborative groups, it is useful to remind groups of this via any number of means from creating shared files to verbally pointing out connections, to handing out swag (e.g., buttons, keychains) that identify participants to one another. There will always be faculty who have teaching, administrative, and personal conflicts that prevent them from attending meetings or workshops. Flexible facilitator leadership should include intentionally providing faculty leadership with time and space to meet one-on-one with faculty who express interest in the work but cannot attend.

### **Recommendation 2: Make Interdisciplinary Work and Feedback Intentional**

If multidisciplinary collaborative efforts are to succeed, they must be intentional. Collaborative experiences and accomplishments cannot always reliably grow from informal hallway conversations, team-teaching projects, contextualized courses, meetings of department chairs, or work on institutional committees. Respect for faculty time, attention, and concerns is key. Flexible facilitator leadership must center multidisciplinary participation. Keeping records that identify the discipline/department of participants in every aspect of the work and following up with e-mails, visits to department meetings, special invitations to faculty from underrepresented disciplines, and using means of communication that engage various stakeholders in the community can help to keep the practice multidisciplinary and reduce formation of cliques or fighting for territory. Flexible facilitation should also involve intentional organizational strategies (e.g., planning meetings, agendas, attendance records) to give faculty who have a myriad of goals and responsibilities clear objectives and expectations.

Furthermore, while it is almost impossible to avoid working in small groups in large institutions, it is possible to reduce the likelihood of silos growing back as soon as those groups are formed. For example, each member of the Teagle Project team was on one or more of the CDCP sub-committees. Participants in the APO workshops from the two academic pathways in the pilot project are working as facilitators for the remaining

academic pathways and are part of the GETF. The GETF grew out of the CDCP Summer Institute. This redundancy, intentionally creating interlocking collaborative structures, builds confidence in the work and improves efficiency (Rife & Connor, 2017). For collaborative work to succeed, it is important to listen to and share faculty concerns (Loucks-Horsley, 1996). Soliciting feedback frequently (but not so frequently that participants’ eyes glaze over when they receive yet another form to fill out) and then aggregating and sharing that feedback (anonymously) lets faculty know that leadership is listening to their concerns and responding to them.

Finally, every group related to the large-scale curricular work and unrelated groups that show an interest in the work (e.g., professional development presentation attendees) should get a slightly different form of feedback tailored to their positions, needs, or interests. For example, using the CBAM, we asked participants in APO workshops, “Do you think that general education is integrated into your program well? Why or why not?” However, we asked presentation attendees, “What do you consider the greatest challenge to revising general education at the College?” This allows for more inclusion and less bias in the process. Opportunities for faculty to give open-ended feedback are also useful.

### **Recommendation 3: Emphasize Transparency and Create Community**

Proceed with transparency as much as possible and formulate a communication strategy that works within and between groups. Work one-on-one when it is needed to address varying levels of engagement and familiarity. Share both positive and negative feedback related to the process and publish one group’s accomplishments or struggles for other groups to review and consider. A crucial element in flexible facilitator leadership in making space for multidisciplinary collaborative faculty work is creating space for acknowledging faculty expertise (Tracy, Lettner-Rust, Fergeson, Emerson-Stonnell, & Locascio, 2018). While many faculty are confident in their own disciplines, they often express discomfort when asked to work outside their disciplines, making exclamations such as “I’m an English professor! What do I know about quantitative reasoning?” to diffuse anxiety.

Finding frequent opportunities for faculty to share their expertise with one another in collaborative spaces can help faculty gain confidence working outside of their disciplines. Something as simple as pointing out a faculty member who can bring special expertise to a problem at hand can make group work less tedious and expand leadership practice. This is also a great way to build community in response to “squeaky wheels” who may

not be on-topic but whose concerns are important to acknowledge. Even experts in their fields and faculty who perform service at the institutional or administrative level need integrated and intentional guidance in order to have productive discussions and accomplish tasks. What works for students also works for faculty, who benefit from worksheets, large and small group discussion, discussion questions, guiding principles, group work, presentations, and opportunities to reflect on their work together. A flexible facilitator should have time and space to create these kinds of materials and observe participants' engagement with them.

Collaborative work does not happen without a sense of community that is sensitive to demands on faculty time and energy. Rossing and Lavitt (2016) referred to "a growing misalignment between the support that faculty receive and the current trends in, and the future of higher education" and noted that "formidable institutional challenges often stymie engaged and collaborative scholarship and, ultimately, prevent faculty from engaging in integrative learning themselves" (para. 3). Such institutional challenges, such as ongoing contract negotiations, compound the problem of tight schedules and endless grading, and there are few opportunities for faculty to relax, share thoughts and experiences, and focus on common goals. Creating these types of spaces, including opportunities to gather over food, compete for prizes, or design group presentations all help to promote conviviality, and, most importantly, let faculty know that their work is valuable and supported.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, in our attempt to effect a full-scale transformation of general education that empowers students and faculty to articulate and reinforce the connections between essential skills and students' transfer and career goals, we established several long-term goals for the pilot project and developed a model of leader-as-facilitator that draws from leadership-as-practice to address the constraints on faculty time and energy and to diffuse the existing hierarchical structure. Once we recognized that general education was at the heart of the CDCP's initial development, we intentionally moved the group's focus from broader cross-division concerns to attitudes about and ownership of general education, which has proven to be a good fit.

We addressed the challenge of the dual character of general education, with lofty ideals competing with check boxes, and responded to feedback from faculty by moving general education from disciplines to skills. This also helped to ground our work in the student learning experience, which enabled multiple perspectives and created a

larger, collaborative space for considering both breadth and depth in general education.

Our achievements to date have included creating and codifying a sustainable structure that provides opportunities for cross-divisional work and identifying and defining six essential skills for general education: (a) oral communication/creative expression; (b) quantitative reasoning; (c) scientific reasoning; (d) technological competency; (e) cultural analysis and interpretation; and (f) writing, research, and information literacy. We also have seen a positive shift in faculty participation sentiment, particularly regarding ownership and knowledge of general education in a fairly short period of time.

Our recommendations for creating and supporting sustainable multidisciplinary faculty-driven leadership to achieve larger curricular goals include using or adapting the flexible facilitator leadership model, making interdisciplinary work intentional, and emphasizing transparency and creating community.

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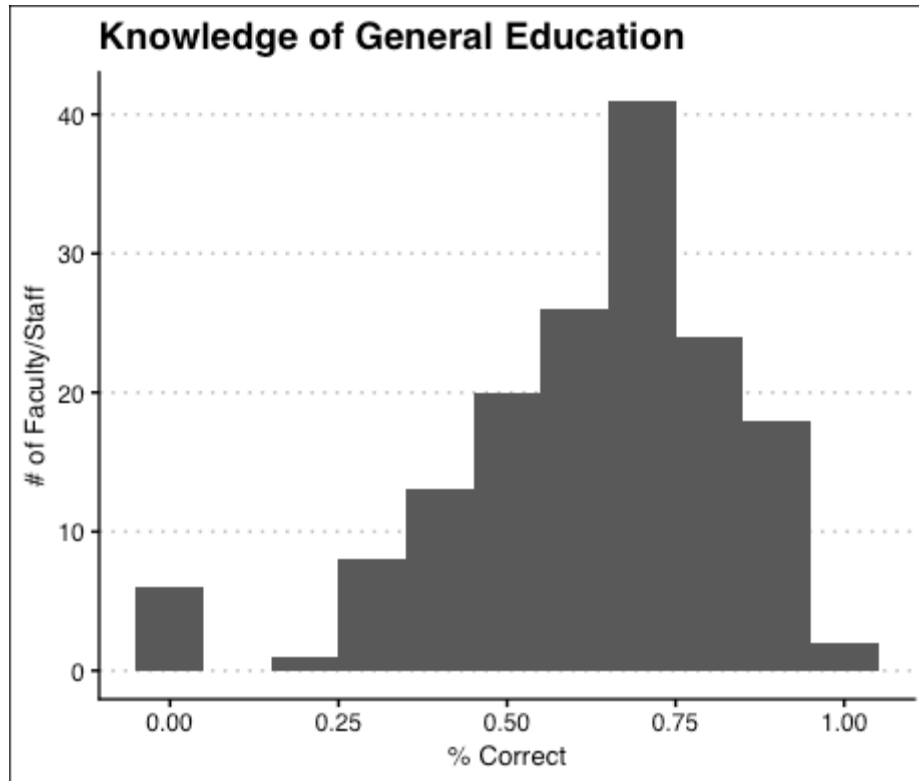
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Appendix A  
Results of Kahoot Survey on Faculty Knowledge of General Education (August 2018)

We administered a Kahoot survey to a gathering of faculty, staff, and administrators on the first day of professional development week in August 2018. The chart below indicates that fewer than 66% of those surveyed were able to correctly identify general education requirements. The height of the bars represents the number of faculty/staff within a specific category. The x-axis represents the percentage of questions answered correctly on the Kahoot, which is between 50-75% of questions answered correctly.



## Appendix B

## Results of Kahoot Survey of Students' Knowledge of General Education Requirements (Early and Late Fall 2018)

In early fall of 2018, a number of faculty teaching first-year experience courses (AH 101: Introduction to the Health Care Professions and FYE 101: First Year Experience) and computer technologies courses (CIS 103: Applied Computer Technology and CSCI 111: Computer Science with Java and Python) administered a Kahoot survey to their students that measured students' knowledge of general education requirements at the college. In late fall 2018, those same instructors administered the survey again. The following table shows that the number of correct answers did not change dramatically from early to late fall.

	Average % correct (early fall)	Average % correct (late fall)	Difference (% PTS)
Allied Health 101	39.9%	37.8%	- 2.1%
Computer Information Systems/Computer Science	45.7%	--	--
First Year Experience	51.3%	54.4%	+ 3.1%

*Note.* Early fall 2018: AH 101, FYE 101, CIS 103;  $n = 86$ . Late fall 2018: AH 101 and FYE 101;  $n = 487$ .

Appendix C  
Sample Questions From the Concerns-Based Adoption Model by Audience

Audience	Questions
Liberal Arts and Communication Pathway Workshop Fall 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you play a role in general education at the College? Why or why not?</li> <li>• How is general education integrated into your program? In what ways would like to improve that integration, if appropriate?</li> <li>• What do you consider the greatest challenge(s) to revising general education at Community College of Philadelphia?</li> <li>• What role(s) do you think that students, faculty, and administration should play in revising general education at the College?</li> </ul>
Department head meeting Spring 2019 CDCP Summer Institute May-June 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would you describe the relationship between general education and your program(s)?</li> <li>• What is the purpose of general education at the College and/or in higher education in general?</li> <li>• How does your discipline or area of work at the College relate to general education?</li> <li>• What concerns do you have about revising general education at the College?</li> <li>• How can we simplify general education yet ensure that students have access to a variety of disciplines and courses?</li> <li>• What are the best ways to communicate with students and/or faculty about how general education relates to students' career and transfer goals?</li> </ul>
GETF meeting #1 Summer 2019 & GETF meeting #7 Fall 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What part of the general education revision are you most concerned about? Why? What is your recommendation for addressing that concern?</li> </ul>
Professional Development Week Fall 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does/should general education help our students achieve their academic and career goals?</li> </ul>
GETF Meeting #7 Fall 2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What part of the general education revision are you most concerned about? Why? What is your recommendation for addressing that concern?</li> </ul>