

“It Seems Like a Chore”: A Qualitative Analysis of Faculty and Student Perceptions of Global Learning in the Core

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Abstract: Mechanisms supporting global learning and global citizenship continue to be incorporated as curricular and co-curricular components of undergraduate education in the United States. Global learning promotes critical thinking and problem-solving and intercultural competency – skills that studies find are highly prized among employers. However, few studies have investigated faculty and student perceptions of global learning where it has been implemented in core educational curricula. In this article, the authors present findings from a qualitative study of a general education global learning curricular requirement at a liberal arts university in the southeastern US. Utilizing student focus groups and faculty interviews, the authors conclude that, while attitudes of global learning are high and it is deemed an important part of education by both students and faculty, the institutional barriers and challenges to teaching and learning in this area are difficult to overcome.

Keywords: global learning, core curriculum, liberal arts

Introduction

Liberal arts institutions continue to incorporate global learning and global citizenship education (GCE) into curriculum and co-curricular opportunities for undergraduates in the United States (Kinzie, Helms, & Cole, 2017; Landorf, Doscher, & Hardrick, 2018; Whitehead, 2015). Global learning refers to the promotion of critical thinking and problem-solving on key issues, such as conflict and poverty (DeNardis 2015; Hanvey, 1982; Doscher & Landorf, 2018; Soedjatmoko & Newland, 1987), and a way to inspire students to become active global citizens (Barkatsas & Bertram, 2016; Barker, 2020; Hovland, 2006, 2014; Landorf, Doscher, & Hardrick, 2018). Scholars highlight global learning as a way for universities to demonstrate their commitment to addressing the world’s pervasive problems (Boni & Walker, 2013; Bikowski & Phillips 2019), while preparing students for employment and equipping them with key skills.

Global learning is considered a high impact by the Association of American Colleges and Universities practice (Kuh 2008). It provides avenues for critical reflection of contemporary issues, such as global warming and conflict (AAC&U, 2008, p. 2), and skills deemed important by employers, such as intercultural competency (Hart Research Associates, 2015; Hovland & Schneider, 2011). Thus, global learning is not simply about internationalizing curricular and co-curricular efforts or attracting more international students, but rather emphasizes the preparedness of students “for citizenship in a diverse and interconnected world” (Landorf, Doscher, & Hardrick, 2018).

Although both “global citizen” and global learning are definitionally and operationally somewhat unclear (Braskamp, 2008; Calahan, 2018; Hovland, 2014; Kahn & Agnew 2017; Lewin 2009; Sperandio, Gudzinski-Hall, & Steward-Gambino, 2010; Schneider 2015), mechanisms supporting these endeavors continue to be incorporated in liberal arts curricula. Mechanisms include curricular opportunities, such as adding global-themed courses as optional or mandatory components of the undergraduate experience, and co-curricular opportunities, such as study abroad, increasing

international student recruitment, and sponsoring speakers with global themes (Kinzie, Helms, & Cole, 2017; Stein, 2020; Wobbe & Vaz, 2015). Research has further identified principles and mechanisms that undergird global learning, such as reflection, perspective shifting and consciousness, the ability to connect macro- and micro-level issues (Kahn & Agnew, 2017), and approaching global learning with a “students as partners” perspective (Green, 2019). Despite this proliferation of scholarship which seeks to define global learning and identify effective principles that undergird specific teaching and learning mechanisms, there has been a dearth of research studying student and faculty attitudes and opinions about global learning, especially regarding how it fits in a mandatory curricular context. The purpose of this study is to fill this gap by qualitatively assessing faculty and student perceptions of one liberal arts institution’s mandatory global learning core curriculum area component. Data collected from faculty and students illuminate the form, function, and perception of a global learning course as part of a core curriculum for undergraduate students enrolled at a public liberal arts college. Our data thus contribute to scholarly debates via this case study, which reveals the perceived impact of one approach to implementing global learning in a higher education context.

Background

Previous studies have revealed diverse student attitudes and perceptions about global learning. Some research indicates that many students “do not plan” to take a global studies or international-themed course even where it is a mandatory curricular component, reflecting a lack of knowledge about curricular requirements (Kinzie, Helms, & Cole, 2017). Similarly, many students do not intend to participate in high-impact practices with global themes, such as study abroad (Ibid, 2017); importantly, these practices may be exclusionary because of time, cost, or curricular considerations. However, a quantitative study of a mandatory global learning curricular program demonstrates that students have generally positive attitudes towards global learning (Butler & Reinke, 2020).

Few studies have examined student attitudes towards global learning and the institutional mechanisms by which global learning is provided, and even fewer studies have examined the same questions from the faculty perspective. The purpose of this study is to qualitatively assess faculty and student perceptions of global learning as a mandatory part of a core curriculum at a liberal arts institution in the southeastern US. This institution has implemented global learning as a four-credit hour general education course for sophomore students. All undergraduates at this institution are required to take the course, “Global Perspectives,” which is colloquially known to the institution’s faculty and students as GC2Y.

GC2Y was initially created after the dissolution of Interdisciplinary Studies courses (IDST), which comprised four hours (two two-credit hour courses) in the core. GC2Y filled the credit hour gap in the general education Area B requirements of the institution as well as a need to continue offering interdisciplinary subject matter to all students. It also was perceived by one interviewee to fix some “serious quality problems” that plagued IDST, including the lack of available and willing faculty and poor-quality instruction. Whereas IDST courses in the core were specific in scope and topic, GC2Y courses are proposed by the faculty member and must meet benchmark criteria. Criteria for the committee that evaluates proposals include whether the class is sufficiently global in nature, requires an outside-the-class component, has a use of the fourth hour, and is writing intensive. The fourth hour component of this course requires an additional meeting time per week or a few longer class meetings that occur sporadically throughout the semester and which are scheduled by the instructor. These are considered opportunities to engage in field trips or site visits, spend time together in the writing laboratories, engage in community service, or watch full-length films with discussion. A previous quantitative assessment of the GC2Y initiative indicated the majority of students feel learning about global issues helps them understand ethical issues in other cultures and most believed that all

students should be required to take at least one global issues course as part of their curriculum. In addition, students reported a variety of factors influenced which GC2Y course they selected including day and time of the class, title of the course, and preference for the instructor (Butler & Reinke, 2020). For a more detailed summary of the GC2Y program, including essential learning outcomes, mandatory inclusion of a Learning Beyond the Classroom (LBTC) component, and the program's overall contribution to the liberal arts, see Butler and Reinke (2020).

Research Methodology

Research Context

This research was conducted at a small public liberal arts college in the southeastern United States. The university has approximately 6,000 students at any given time and predominately serves undergraduates. The student population is largely traditional, White, and majority self-identify as female.

Data Collection

Interviews with faculty and focus groups with students were conducted in fall 2018 and spring 2019. This study is a follow-up to quantitative surveys of student attitudes towards global learning at the same institution which were distributed and collected in fall 2016. The Institutional Review Board approved this research prior to the beginning of data collection and analysis.

One-on-one interviews were conducted with 21 faculty. All faculty who taught one or more GC2Y courses anytime from fall 2016 (when the quantitative survey was distributed) to fall 2018 (when the qualitative study commenced) were invited via e-mail to participate in an interview. Faculty were not compensated for their participation. Twenty-one faculty ultimately participated in an interview, reflecting a 55% response rate. Sixty-two percent of faculty interviewees were assigned to faculty lines in the College of Arts and Sciences, the largest College in the university. The remaining 38% represented other colleges, such as the College of Education and College of Business. Fourteen percent of faculty interviewees held positions we define as “precarious”: limited term lecturers, adjunct instructors, or other limited-term temporary positions. The remaining 86% were permanent lecturers, tenure-track or tenured professors. Interview questions asked about background information (i.e., How long have you been teaching GC2Y?), the GC2Y course proposal process, perceptions of the “ideal outcomes” of GC2Y courses, and institutional barriers to proposing, changing, or offering GC2Y courses, and concluded with an invitation to provide advice to other instructors who are considering teaching global learning courses (see Appendix A for interview protocol).

The investigators recruited potential focus group participants from undergraduate classes including health science and humanities courses. Participation in the focus groups was optional and students received extra credit for volunteering (IRB-approved). Four student focus groups were conducted for a total of 39 undergraduate participants. Focus group questions were based upon the initial quantitative survey deployed in fall 2016. Focus group questions included how and why students chose their GC2Y course, their perceived purpose of GC2Y, their definition of global learning, the level of importance global learning has for them, whether GC2Y is effective at providing global learning, institutional barriers to fulfilling their course requirement, what they liked best and least about their chosen course, and recommendations to instructors teaching GC2Y courses (see Appendix B for focus group protocol). Participants also completed a brief demographic survey. Over 84% of respondents had already completed their GC2Y requirement and 95% were Juniors or Seniors. Approximately 85% of student focus group participants self-identified as White, 10% Black, 5%

Hispanic/Latino, and 3% Asian. Ten percent of respondents self-identified as Male and the remaining 90% self-identified as Female. While the racial and ethnic distribution of participants is reflective of university demographics as a whole, the sample is biased in terms of self-identified sex. In response to which course participants took to fulfill their GC2Y requirement, 18 different courses were represented, spanning three university colleges, including the College of Arts and Sciences, College of Health, and College of Education.

Interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim to facilitate qualitative analysis in Nvivo 11. Transcripts were inductively coded to identify emergent themes. Key themes emerged from this approach to coding in both focus groups and interviews, including institutional barriers, definitions and perceptions of global learning, and the importance of instructor passion and interest in the topic they teach. The subsequent sections of this piece are divided by participant and method type (Faculty Interviews and Student Focus Groups) with sub-sections based on the predominate themes and concerns that emerged in each.

Faculty Interviews

Perceptions of Global Learning

All faculty interviewees perceived global learning very positively and were able to reflect on how global learning applies to their unique course context. When asked about the student objectives and their own goals for the course, faculty universally responded with some mention of global learning, global citizenship, diversity, or global themes. For one faculty member, GC2Y is considered a “gateway to the liberal arts” and central to the undergraduate experience at the college. For others, the central tenet of importance is the broadening of horizons – the focus on expanding the minds of students beyond their own geographic borders. According to one: “You take the lessons learned, the critical thinking skills, and being able to apply them to something that’s not America, something that is beyond us and topics that are beyond our normal.” To another faculty member students:

are getting material they’ve never seen before. And the global component, they’re forced to look at stuff from outside of the world. So, whether they like it or not, most students don’t pay attention to what’s going on in the news and stuff even here, much less globally. They’re being forced to look at BBC and Al-Jazeera and world news...it gets them outside of their comfort zones.

Faculty reflected on how global themes and issues get students to think outside their own lived experience, but also engage them in questions about how global issues link to their local context and lives. Many students at this university come from more affluent and predominately White suburban backgrounds; in these ways, the college is not very diverse and purportedly has a difficult time retaining students from diverse or marginalized backgrounds. For one faculty interviewee, global learning in GC2Y brings diversity into the classroom, forcing students to engage these issues when they otherwise might not:

Obviously, there’s been tons of talk about diversity. There’s tons of talk about global perspectives, making [our students] global citizens. Global citizenship is something actually I take very seriously...but you know we don’t have diversity on this campus, obviously. Our student body is the opposite of diverse, right. So where are they going to get it? They have to have it in classrooms. And I feel like, on paper at least, the mission and the way the GC2Ys are designed are serving that or trying to serve that.

For faculty, teaching a course dedicated to global learning gave them an opportunity to expose what they view as a relatively homogenous student body to a broader view of the world in which they live – an opportunity our faculty interviewees considered key to student development. Despite the benefits of GC2Y, faculty expressed concerns about the way in which global learning was implemented at their institution, including course scheduling.

Fourth Hour

Almost all faculty interviewees scheduled their required fourth hour components sporadically throughout the semester in larger blocks of time rather than as one additional hour in class each week. For faculty teaching many courses as lecturers, those teaching more than one GC2Y in a semester, and for precarious faculty, having an additional hour of class each week may be impractical. According to one faculty interviewee, “I teach way more classes than other faculty, so my time has to be divided differently” than those teaching an additional hour each week.

Several interview participants shared their interest in scheduling the fourth hour for Saturdays so that they could take field trips to a larger city that is about an hour and a half drive away. These faculty had generally positive statements about the fourth hour requirement, albeit with some reservations given the practical concerns that arise with scheduling and managing field trips. For those faculty teaching many classes or multiple GC2Y sections in a given semester, the practicality of managing so many students is challenging: “As much as I would love to take students to Atlanta, I teach [multiple] sessions and many students, so I can’t do that. If I could do fieldtrips or something like that, it would be wonderful!”

Others shared cautionary tales about faculty who conduct field trips. Managing students on the journey, getting insurance approvals, garnering funds for transportation, and other bureaucratic hurdles pose a significant challenge and take time and energy to overcome. As a result, some faculty require students to attend events or visit sites in urban areas but cannot legally ask them to carpool. The results, according to one interviewee are mixed: “I’ve heard really mixed results about other faculty sending the students [to the city] to go do visits. They end up just faking visits and that’s not productive.” The concern about “faking visits” was shared among a number of faculty interviewees. Subsequently, many felt it was not worth the time or energy to arrange and, in the absence of a class field trip, the knowledge that students might not make the trek, but might subsequently lie in their written work undercut their interests in advocating for these activities and assignments.

Nineteen out of 21 interviewees questioned the utility of the fourth hour. According to one:

“I have to wonder how valuable the fourth hour really is...I know that other faculty don’t maximize it” so “I have to really wonder what the cost-benefit analysis is if that extra contact hour is really enhancing the class at all or if it has been being blown off and kind of used as institutional leverage for some administrative concern beyond us. To say, ‘hey this class is much more rigorous because it’s four contact hours instead of three’ but is it really?”

The logistical challenges of traveling for field trips and site visits mean that many faculty schedule their fourth hours in blocks of time for film showings and discussion. The majority of faculty interviewed used at least some of their fourth hour time blocks to show films and promote discussion afterwards or have students complete film reviews via a work sheet or essay. However, they simultaneously question how pedagogically effective this approach is. According to one interviewee that uses film showings and discussion during their fourth hour: “Do I like being able to show a film and doing a discussion? That’s great! Yes. But I’m not sure it’s a whole lot different than what I’m doing in a classroom.”

Beyond the pedagogical questions about the fourth hour, there are also practical implications with regards to scheduling. Faculty routinely expressed how students would seem “confused” about the mandatory fourth hour class times:

Even though in the registration it tells them [students] their schedule including the fourth hours so when they’re registering, they know when those are coming up. I still get a lot of students who are like ‘oh I have to babysit, and I have to work’ or more importantly ‘I have my fraternity or sorority initiation at night.’

Despite 19 out of 21 interviewees expressing more than one concern about the fourth hour, two interviewees were overwhelmingly positive about this additional time in the classroom. For one, this provided an “opportunity to use high impact practices” that “disrupts the sitting” and passive learning and gets students out of the “college bubble.” These faculty reflected on using simulations or other learning activities that were active, rather than passive, and promoted engaged participation during class. Regardless of the utility of the fourth hour, several faculty interviewees expressed further concerns about how they were compensated (or the lack of compensation) for the additional time spent in the classroom for their global learning course.

Compensation

Although GC2Y is a four-hour course as opposed to the more normative three-hour general education credit hour courses, some faculty interviewees expressed confusion about compensation. However, there is disagreement amongst interviewee responses regarding the issue of compensation. Some faculty believed that they were chronically over their teaching load because of the additional hour of teaching, while others are in academic units that roll over additional credit hours for an eventual course release, or even that they earned a course release every time they taught one GC2Y course. Still others with higher teaching loads might teach more than one GC2Y each semester; the fourth hours add up to their full teaching load in a given semester.

These differences in compensation and course assignment experiences were linked to the department level, not the college level – interviewees in different departments within the same college had diverse stories with regards to GC2Y compensation. Regardless, the lack of transparency for how faculty are compensated for their time was a common frustration. One interviewee reflects on their GC2Y compensation experience:

I’ve taught at least one semester of extra classes since I’ve been here. This is personally frustrating. I was not made aware that other faculty have received course releases at this school for teaching GC2Y so yes, I would say personally I feel afflicted by this situation. Professionally I feel like I’m not reaping the investment of time I’ve put into [the course].

Faculty reflected that “there’s no incentive for teaching it.” Given the general lack of institutional resources and support for faculty in addition to discrepancies in compensation, the frustration of faculty interviewed concerning these issues was often palpable during data collection.

However, a tenured faculty interviewee stated that “the class is so fulfilling [to teach] that no one’s ever asked for compensation” in their unit that they are aware of. However, this interviewee also recognized that faculty in their unit are already overworked and often take overloads to meet student demand; thus, the additional fourth hour is not necessarily a problem when it is contextualized in these broader institutional issues.

Institutional Challenges and Assessment

In addition to compensation, all faculty interviewees were asked if they had encountered any institutional challenges or barriers to offering GC2Y at their university. Several stated that there is no unit, administrator, or committee that provides oversight, guidance, or support to faculty teaching GC2Y and its sister class for freshman, GC1Y. According to one faculty member there is “no unifying person in charge of it.” The result is variable rigor and student experiences based on their course selection. GC2Y was characterized as “an orphan program” with one interviewee stating that “it’s like it’s nobody’s baby right now.”

While there is no single staff member, committee, or unit that provides oversight or guidance for GC2Y, there is an assessment process for all general education courses. According to interviewees, assessment processes and procedures for all general education courses, including GC2Y, had increased in the year following up to this project. This likely affected the subsequent prevalence of assessment as a theme in faculty responses. University assessment of GC2Y was universally denigrated by all 21 faculty interviewees that spoke about the subject. Response examples include:

I don’t think we are doing it right at all. I think we’re spending so much time worrying about assessment that we’ve lost sight of our goal.

You know we’re assessing everything right now and they’re like, well, ‘we’ll have someone assess your assessment to make sure you assess correctly’...Everybody was like ‘wait a second, wait a second, what’s going on?’

I’m not interested in assessment...I was talking to a colleague about this idea and his thought was that he would really like to sit down with a group of colleagues—other faculty—and have a conversation about assessment and your thoughts and feelings and ideas about the “how” and then the “why.”

This last time when I got it [the assessment form] I think I got it and did not respond [laughs] and then they went to the dean! I got a note from the dean saying ‘Can you fill out this form?’

To several faculty, assessment was deemed “completely inaccurate and pointless” because they are assessing student grades rather than reflective learning. Several faculty indicated that they feel their job in GC2Y is to help students build writing skills, but more importantly to kick-start an interest in the broader world and diverse perspectives. These are not easily captured in quantitative assessment and analyses and the results may take years of student thought and reflection to fully develop. As a result, assessment was characterized variously by faculty interviewees as an “activity in senselessness” that “becomes this kind of institutionalized bureaucracy” that is separate from the ultimate goals of the course.

While many interviewees spent quite a bit of time discussing their thoughts on assessment, some pointed to other institutional issues. One faculty member shared their concern that faculty asked to teach GC2Y are not necessarily the “best and brightest” as university administrators often claim:

Sometimes the worst teachers are the ones shunting to GC2Y. It’s like ‘we can’t have you teach you know whatever discipline with that prefix, because our majors will be turned away. You are going to teach GC2Y.’ Some departments are putting their worst teachers who they don’t know what to do with in teaching GC2Y.”

Another faculty member shared their concern about the equal distribution of students enrolled in GC2Y classes. Although the university reportedly sends emails requesting faculty to teach more GC2Y courses and, in some cases, to accept students off their waitlists so that they can meet their

general education requirements, not all GC2Y classes fill. One faculty interviewee reflects on not only the consistency of teaching this course, but also the number of students enrolled: “Not only have I taught more GC2Ys, but also every single one of them has been completely full. I know that other faculty taught GC2Ys and they’ve not had the same students per class.” This interviewee in particular demonstrated concern that not only were they unpaid for the fourth hour, but that they also had full GC2Ys every time they taught their course.

Student Focus Groups

Motivations for GC2Y Course

When asked why they chose their particular GC2Y course, students had varied responses. Some chose a course based on their interest level or major. Others chose their course because it was the only option that fit their schedule.

One student went directly to the university’s webpage listing of all GC2Y courses, which includes a brief description of each class: “I went to the website and read the description of all of them. Two sounded most interesting to me, but that course is what fit my schedule.” This student narrowed down the list to two course options that sounded like the best fit for their interests and major, then made the final choice based upon what fit around their other required courses.

Others chose their course based upon the course title. According to one focus group participant, the class she wanted to enroll in sounded “sexy” and interesting based upon the title and brief description she managed to find online. She was initially on the waitlist for the course; however, the waitlist moved quickly, and she managed to procure a spot in the class:

“I fought so hard to get in that class. I was like ‘I will punch a girl right off the waitlist to get in that class.’ As soon as I was in that class for two minutes I thought, it was just a lot of research and anthropological research. It was very weird. I thought ‘I’m already taking an anthropology class this semester.’ But yeah.”

Student interviewees thus reflected several reasons for why they chose a particular GC2Y, including course scheduling concerns or the course description. Regardless of the course they chose, students appeared able, during focus groups, to link GC2Y to the broader university mission or some core components of global learning.

Purpose of GC2Y

Students were first asked what they perceived to be the purpose of GC2Y. Participants consistently responded in ways that linked the course to the liberal arts mission of their institution, issues of diversity, and preparedness as a citizen. In one focus group with eight participants, they reflected on GC2Y as a mechanism to achieve “well-rounded, liberal arts education.” When asked to define “what does a well-rounded liberal arts education mean to you?” participants defined it as “exposing us to things we normally wouldn’t have” and “global perspectives, which is definitely a thing they try to hit on in those classes.”

Junior and senior student participants that had previously taken their GC2Y reflected on their experience. These participants often shared an interest in taking the class in their upper-class years when they had more interest and appreciation for the complex content therein. They shared their lack of enthusiasm for their chosen GC2Y at the time of enrollment:

I think I would have enjoyed it or gotten a lot more out of the class if I had taken it later on than when I was a sophomore. At that time, it was like ‘what’s the point? This is silly.

I didn’t appreciate it or have the maturity level to appreciate it when I was a sophomore...as a sophomore I was immature and was like ‘this is stupid, I don’t want to take it.’

Despite their ability to clearly link GC2Y with global learning, global citizenship, and diversity issues, some students believe that these efforts have a better home in the latter part of a student’s education at the university.

Global Learning

Students were also asked “what does global learning meant to you?” Focus group participants pointed to the need to broaden their horizons and emphasized the importance of learning diverse perspectives and beliefs in order to better themselves and foster good working relationships and communication with people different from themselves:

I think the purpose of global perspectives is to have perspective of different cultures and people around the world...it’s all about finding out how they live and work and doing it in a respectful way. So, if you come across someone you can understand and know, but not fully, how they understand. You can relate on an educational level and not be really rude to them.

We are such a small college and community that it’s easy to get lost in the college ‘bubble.’ We don’t really have a lot of diversity on campus, so having courses that forces us to recognize that there are cultures out there beyond our own and that there are beliefs out there beyond our own is really important.

Students in each focus group nearly unanimously answered “yes” to whether global learning is important for students at their university. One participant expanded that “it’s important to be aware of issues going on in other parts of the world and not just what’s happening here.” Another responded affirmed their classmate’s perspective, adding “I want to have a broad knowledge about different things that I’m able to learn about and to be able to have like *real* conversations with people.”

However, when asked whether GC2Y provides global learning, the vast majority of participants quickly responded “no” orally or with a shake of their head. The expanded on this perspective by, yet again, highlighting the timing of the course. A senior student reflected that “I feel like that’s a good idea, the idea of it, but maybe taking it later in life, because I probably can’t recount like more than two things from that class.” According to another:

Had I taken this as just an elective now I would be more prepared. Right now, as we’re older and closer to graduating, we want to know more about the world around us. When we first get here, we don’t care, we just want to experience college. I would like to take those now because I don’t remember most of it and I really wish I did, because my professor was really into this.

Students feel positively about global learning and their comments indicate that they believe it should be part of the curriculum at the university, but that perhaps the sophomore year is too soon for the topics taught in GC2Y. Furthermore, while students indicated the potential utility of global

learning, they did not clearly define it. Much as with faculty participants, they reflected on the broader benefits of global learning, such as diversity.

Fourth Hour

Whereas faculty participants shared how they meet the fourth hour requirement in their courses during interviews, student focus group participants had widely variable experiences regarding the use (or lack thereof) of the fourth hour. Some respondents claimed their courses did not have a fourth hour at all. When asked about how the fourth hour time was used in their GC2Y, one student exclaimed that “we got to go home early!” while another stated “I’m glad there wasn’t a fourth hour in mine.” Another student recalls that there was a fourth hour but was confused about what their instructor was trying to accomplish during that time: “I had no idea what was going on for the entire time. Maybe that’s the global perspective, that you’re not supposed to know what’s happening!”

Whereas in some classes the fourth hour was not even discussed as a requirement, in others it was discussed but without follow through from the professor. One student explains:

We were supposed to watch documentaries once a week, but we watched one documentary all semester. Like outside of class. It was supposed to be an hour that we watched a documentary every week outside of class, but he kept saying he was going to assign them.

According to another student, their professor scheduled the fourth hour, met during the fourth hour, and they spent their time watching films. However, the professor would not stay for the fourth hour, which jeopardized the student buy-in and enthusiasm for the class. They expanded on this issue by saying:

My professor tried, sometimes. Like he would come in and say, ‘we’re going to watch a movie’ like one time he came in and was like ‘we’re going to watch this movie.’ But then he left. And I was like ‘college students are not going to stay. If you’re gone, they’re going to leave. They’re not going to stay and watch a movie because they don’t want to come to class regardless. So now you’re gone there’s no incentive to stay. So just being present. His attitude was like he doesn’t care about the class. So, the attitude of caring about the class and trying to implement something that’s interesting to both the professor and the students. Trying to do something like that.

However, most students were enrolled in GC2Ys that used the fourth hour and their professor was present during that time. The primary way the additional class time was used was in larger chunks of time where students watched a film and had discussion every few weeks. According to one focus group participant, “We just watched movies. It was fun. I think I learned more from the movies than the class.”

For others, their fourth hour was merged with other GC2Y courses. During these blocks of time, their class met in a larger space with another GC2Y that was taught by the same professor. A participant expanded on this topic with the following:

I think my professor had two GC2Ys and she just decided to like merge those classes at the fourth hour, together, it was weird. We would go and on certain days like go and meet in this lecture room and there would be a second class in there that was also her class. We would all take tests together and stuff, but they weren’t in my GC2Y class on a regular, it was just for this one time, one class like every two weeks we would have a big extra long class and we

would just be together. It was really weird. But also, because now we're in a big lecture room instead of the closed quarters we aren't talking as much. It's just her lecturing or her putting on a movie and me sitting all the way in the back with my laptop watching "The Little Couple" on TLC."

Although merging GC2Ys during the fourth hour was not mentioned by faculty interviewees, it is likely that professors teaching multiple GC2Y classes that expressed limited availability to schedule multiple separate fourth hour sessions would have their classes meet at the same time and place during the fourth hour for efficiency. The fourth hour was but one challenge students mentioned during their focus groups.

Challenges and Frustrations

Approximately half of student respondents were on a waitlist for their GC2Y course before being enrolled in that course or deciding to switch to a different course that did not have a waitlist. This institutional barrier was reflected in faculty interviews, where interviewees claim that administrators would email before each academic year, asking for more instructors to teach GC2Y. There never seemed to be enough sections of the course to meet student demand, despite fixed enrollment for incoming classes.

Students report that they often had to choose a GC2Y based on scheduling conflicts with prerequisite courses for their major, work schedule, and the ability to get off the waitlist and into the course to meet their general education requirement, rather than choosing a course based on topical interest. One student reflects on how this dynamic appears to affect some faculty:

Students just *have* to take a GC2Y. So, they'll look and be like 'Oh, that's the only one that fits in my schedule, I'm going to take that.' And so now the professor, who could be really passionate about the subject, is surrounded by students that couldn't care less and are just in it because they have to take all these other classes, and this is the only one they could like shimmy in. So, they're just like 'why should I put the effort in when my students don't care?' They just want to get that credit and get out of here.'

The poor dynamics between students and faculty in GC2Y courses remained a consistent theme throughout all student focus groups. Students perceived some faculty to view GC2Y as a chore, an unwanted course, and a nuisance:

it seems like a chore. It reminded me of when elementary school teachers had bus duty and complained about it. "Oh, I have to teach a GC2Y this semester." They complained about it.

It felt like they gave up on us, or it felt like my professor gave up on us before we started. Like he would talk, but he knew we weren't going to understand what he was saying. There were such low expectations.

The result from the student perspective was a lack of buy-in and interest from those enrolled in the course. This was further evidenced by those students who claimed their instructor never held a fourth hour, canceled class frequently, showed up late to class frequently, or left class during film showings. They deemed that the professor did not care about the course, the objectives of GC2Y, or the students. This subsequently further affected their lack of enthusiasm for a required course that they felt was too complex for their maturity level or preparedness during their sophomore year.

Discussion

The present study is one of few qualitative assessments of a university wide GCE initiative which includes both faculty and student perspectives. Results of the faculty interviews groups revealed a variety of strengths of the GC2Y initiative. For example, faculty viewed global learning and GCE positively and felt the GC2Y program made unique contributions to the students' experience in a liberal arts setting. In addition, the global context and attitudinal components of the GC2Y courses enabled opportunities for students that extended beyond their lived experiences. These findings support prior research which stated global learning is not just important, but key for the educational growth and development of students, although we cannot confirm research stating that it benefits their employability in a diverse workforce that demands particular skills, such as inter-cultural competency (AAC&U, 2001, p. 11; Hovland & Schneider, 2011). Despite this, faculty provided criticism of the GC2Y program which may impact the administration of the program and key campus policies regarding its structure. For example, many participants felt the requirement of the fourth hour was not practical and the lack of additional compensation for this portion of their courses to be unjust. In addition, faculty reported a lack of transparency regarding course policy, a lack of perceived efficacy in the course evaluation process conducted by academic affairs, and a need to recruit additional faculty based upon professional experience and educational fit as key programmatic issues. Overall, insights from faculty regarding the challenges and problems of the GC2Y program reflect inherit administrative issues with implementation rather than pedagogical practices or the perceptions regarding the need for the program.

The focus groups with student participants revealed similar findings. When asked what influenced their decision process in selecting their GC2Y course, some students replied that the course description reflected content that was related to their chosen major. However, many other students shared that selection was based upon non-curricular issues such as finding a class that fit their schedule. These findings are consistent with the previous quantitative assessment of the GC2Y program which revealed that both the day/time of the course offering, and title of the course were most likely to influence students' course selection (Butler & Reinke, 2020). Like faculty, students believe the GC2Y program provides a strong connection to the liberal arts mission of the university. Similarly, although they did not provide clear definitions of global learning during focus groups, they reported that their courses strengthened their knowledge of diversity and prepared them as a more knowledgeable citizen. The previous assessment of the GC2Y program has also demonstrated that undergraduate students have positive attitudes towards global learning (Butler & Reinke, 2020). For example, the majority of students believed global issues courses helped them understand their place in the world, that they help them understand social issues, and that they are interested in becoming a better global citizen (Butler & Reinke, 2020). Results of the present study indicate that students can operationally define global learning and attest to its importance in a college curriculum. Despite this, many believed the instructor of their GC2Y did not adequately incorporate global learning or global perspectives in their GC2Y course.

Student participants expressed other challenges such as the fourth hour requirement and, in some cases, the lack of engagement of instructors during this assigned time. In addition, while all students believe global learning was important, some indicated that it would be more effective to require a GC2Y course later in their academic career. However, the implementation of the program within the core curriculum is one key pragmatic element of the GC2Y initiative. As part of a network of public institutions, the college hosting GC2Y has select pre-determined requirements and credit limitations. GC2Y was incorporated into an area of the core which a selected number of credits was left open for "institutional options." In addition, a previous campus-wide initiative attempted to require a certain number of credits which contained a "global overlay." Eventually, the requirement

was dropped as it was not practical for some students to meet the global requirement while concurrently completing their major requirements. Given this, it is unlikely that the GC2Y requirement will be moved from its current slot within the core to a spot later in the curriculum as part of a major.

The previous assessment of the GC2Y program relied solely upon quantitative variables with closed-ended questions. While the questionnaire used was deemed both valid and reliable, it can be hypothesized that a qualitative design would be beneficial to capture both student and faculty perspectives in a more comprehensive manner. In addition, while the previous study included student viewpoints, the perspective of faculty instructors was absent. To overcome these limitations, the present study utilized a qualitative design which included one-on-one interviews with faculty and focus groups with students. This strategy proved advantageous from a variety of perspectives. For example, faculty participants were provided a unique opportunity to voice their opinions regarding the GC2Y initiative as a whole, including its strengths and visible weaknesses. The confidentiality of the setting and structure of the interview provided faculty with a voice that they might not otherwise felt comfortable expressing to administrators. Finally, the use of an interviewer who had extensive experience teaching a GC2Y course, as well as the high overall faculty response rate (55%), may have contributed to the validity of the data collection. In similar fashion, student participants may have benefited from the use of the qualitative design. The use of focus groups provided students with ample opportunity to express their opinions, some of which may not have been captured in the quantitative questionnaire of the previous assessment. In addition, focus groups provided a unique atmosphere where students could interact with their peers and hence their viewpoints were given more opportunities to demonstrate flexibility during the sessions. Like faculty, students may have felt more comfortable expressing both positive aspects of the GC2Y program, as well as issues of dissent.

Despite its strengths, the present study has additional limitations to consider. For example, the majority of focus group participants were health science majors who self-identified as women. In addition, almost all were upper-class students completing their junior or senior year. In part, these results reflect the recruitment efforts by the investigators. For example, upper division courses were intentionally selected for participation to primarily recruit students who had completed their GC2Y requirement. This allowed a sample which were able to provide opinions regarding the variety of elements of the GC2Y program, and few participants reported difficulties in recalling their experiences. In addition, the sponsoring institution has a majority population of women including the health science programs. Despite this, the recruitment strategy resulted in perspectives and opinions regarding 18 different GC2Y courses representing a variety of academic departments. In addition, the previous quantitative study of the GC2Y program assessed global issues attitudes across academic disciplines and found that health science students did not statistically differ from other majors (Butler & Reinke, 2020). Overall, while the study design has limitations including self-reporting data, moderate sample size, and limited generalizability, the use of the qualitative methodology proved advantageous.

Conclusion

Overall, our research indicates that while students have positive attitudes towards global learning and envision it as a key component of the liberal arts, they do not necessarily believe that this particular mandatory core curricular component at the sophomore-level is effective at facilitating this learning. Moreover, the institutional challenges both faculty and students face in providing and receiving this curricular global learning requirement negate some of its potential benefits. Faculty face a number of difficulties in offering GC2Y courses. Scheduling the fourth hour components, the challenges of managing field trips or other out of class experiences, assessment, and compensation all became key themes in their responses. These challenges were mirrored by student respondents who expressed

concerns about scheduling and course availability, the lack of clarity about GC2Y and its placement in the sophomore year, and professor enthusiasm. The organizational and administrative aspects of institutionalizing global learning as part of core curricula is a central component to its effectiveness. Faculty struggle to gain clarity on compensation, instructional support, and expectations, while students face challenges in registering for classes and lodging concerns about their GC2Y.

Despite these challenges and concerns, both faculty and students expressed overwhelmingly positive attitudes towards global learning and incorporating it into the curriculum. Participants see the relevance of global learning for diversity, global citizenship, employment opportunities, and navigating daily life in a complex world. Data thus confirms literature purporting the importance of global learning in undergraduate contexts, particularly where these are implemented as mandatory components of the curriculum. However, we highlight issues of implementation, from student and faculty perspectives, that could better inform other institutions developing a global learning program in their curriculum. These data add to existing studies on the importance of global learning for undergraduates, but also add new considerations of the implementation and practical dimensions of global learning when implemented in the curriculum.

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Appendix

Appendix A. Faculty Interview Protocol.

How long have you been teaching GC2Y?

What initially prompted you to propose a GC2Y course?

Tell me about your experience with the course proposal process.

Tell me about your GC2Y courses content, learning outcomes, and structure. [How did you come to decide on that content, outcomes, and structure?]

What have you changed in your syllabus since the initial proposal process? Why did you make these changes? [Do you feel like these changes better reflect the spirit of GC2Y?]

What do you feel are the most important components of the course for students to master (e.g. assignments, outcomes, readings, etc.)?

What do you feel are the ideal outcomes all GC students should get from the GC2Y course they take? [Do you feel like the majority of your students achieve these outcomes? What teaching practices do you use that you think gets them to these outcomes?]

Do you believe that other instructors and courses achieve these ideal outcomes? [Why or why not?]

If not already provided: What do you do to fulfill the learning beyond the classroom requirement for GC2Y?

What do you believe is the ideal way to use the LBTC time? [What do you think was the spirit in which the LBTC first came to be part of the GC2Y course requirements?]

What do you believe is a less useful way to use the fourth hour time? [Prompt for examples here]

In the past couple years that I have been at this institution, there have been a few semesters where GC2Y instructors were asked to add students off of waitlists and into their courses. Is this a recurring issue? [If so, what do you believe are the underlying factors contributing to this institutional issue? How could we resolve this problem?]

Are there any organizational or infrastructural problems that you have encountered in proposing, changing, or offering your GC2Y course?

Do you feel like your administrators (department chair, dean, provost, etc.) adequately support GC2Y courses and instructors? If so, how? If not, what could they do to offer more support?

What do you like best about your GC2Y class? [What do you like best about teaching your GC2Y?]

What do you like least about your GC2Y class? [What do you like least about teaching your GC2Y?]

If you asked your students, what recommendations do you think they would have for professors who teach GC2Y courses?

If you asked students, what courses do you think they would propose as a GC2Y course?

What is the most favorable memory you have from teaching GC2Y?

If you could offer advice to faculty new to teaching GC2Y, what advice would you give them?

Appendix B. Student Focus Group Protocol.

What GC2Y course have you all taken or are taking? When did you take it? What motivated you to sign up for that particular course?

What do you believe is the purpose of GC2Y?

GC2Y is focused on building global perspectives. What does global learning mean to you? [How would you define 'global learning?']

Is global learning important for students at Georgia College? Why or why not?

Do you believe that your GC2Y is providing/has provided global learning? If so, what contributed most to building your global perspective? If not, what could the instructor have done to build this perspective among the students enrolled?

GC2Y is meant to strengthen students' writing skills. Do you believe that your GC2Y is providing/has provided support in furthering your writing skills? If so, what has contributed most to building this skill? If not, what could the instructor have done to build this perspective among the students enrolled?

GC2Y requires a learning beyond the classroom (fourth hour) component. How did you use the fourth hour time in your GC2Y?

Are there any issues or problems that you've encountered in fulfilling the requirements for your Area B?

What did you like best about your GC2Y course?

What did you like least about your GC2Y course?

What recommendations do you have for professors who teach GC2Y?

Appendix C. Focus Group Demographics.

Participants: 39 total

Number completed a GC2Y course: 33 (84.6%)

Number enrolled in a GC2Y course: 1 (2.6%)

Average age of participants: 21.4 years old

What year are they in their studies:

- Freshman 0 (0%)
- Sophomore 2 (5.1%)
- Junior 18 (46.2%)
- Senior 19 (48.7%)

Major (participants write-in):

- Public Health 23 (58.9%)
- Nursing 3 (7.7%)
- Psychology 7 (17.9%)
- Philosophy 1 (2.6%)
- Environmental Science 1 (2.6%)
- English 1 (2.6%)
- Liberal Studies 1 (2.6%)
- History 1 (2.6%)
- Geography 1 (2.6%)

Gender (participants may choose any and multiple from the selection):

- Male 4 (10.3%)
- Female 35 (89.7%)
- Transgender 0 (0%)

Race (participants may choose any and multiple from the selection):

- American Indian/Alaskan Native 0 (0%)
- Asian 1 (2.6%)
- Black 4 (10.3%)
- Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander 0 (0%)
- White/Caucasian 32 (82.1%)
- Hispanic/Latino 2 (5.1%)
- Other 0 (0%)

GC2Y course taken/enrolled in (participants write-in):

- No response 5 (12.8%)
- Unsure/don't remember 1 (2.6%)
- AIDS Pandemic 2 (5.1%)
- Human Revolution 2 (5.1%)
- Myth, Magic, and the Modern World 2 (5.1%)
- Unnatural Disasters 2 (5.1%)
- Power, Politics, and Tolkien 1 (2.6%)
- Religions of Southeast Asia 8 (20.5%)
- Globalisation of Education and Culture 1 (2.6%)
- French Culture and Revolution 1 (2.6%)
- Plants that Changed the World 1 (2.6%)
- Theater of Social Change 1 (2.6%)
- Sexuality in Southeast Asia 1 (2.6%)
- International Buffoonery 1 (2.6%)
- Bodies without Borders 2 (5.1%)
- Religion (unspecified course) 1 (2.6%)
- Philosophy and social justice (unspecified course) 2 (5.1%)
- Culture change (unspecified course) 1 (2.6%)
- Love, Pleasure in Italy 1 (2.6%)
- Knowledge Democracy 1 (2.6%)

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