What The Faculty Who Teach GE Have to Say About Our Program: Survey Results (Spring 2004)

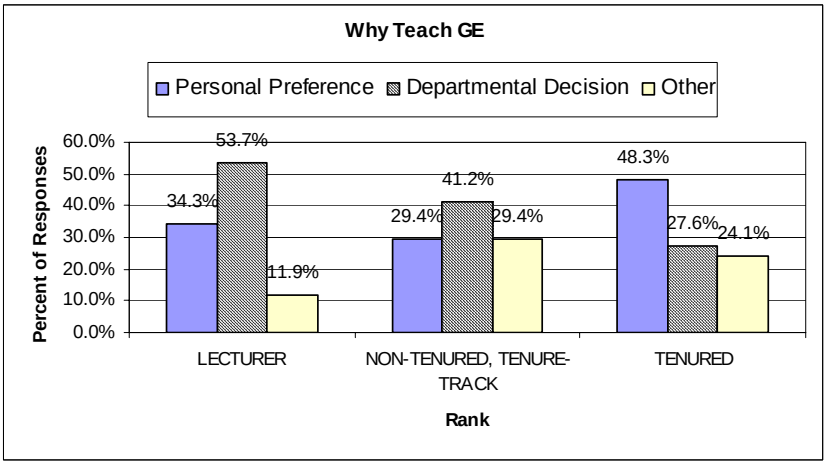
As part of the review of the 1998 General Education (GE) Guidelines, a survey was distributed to all faculty who have taught GE courses within the past 2-3 years. Two hundred ninety-one surveys were distributed, with 142 returned (49% return rate). Of the returns, 47% were from lecturers and 53% from tenure/tenure-track professors. All Areas of GE were represented in the responses, with the breakdown as follows (multiple Areas could be selected when appropriate):

CORE GE Area	Response Total
Oral Communication (A1)	19
Written Communication I (A2 &/or C3)	13
Critical Thinking (A3)	15
Science (B1, B2, and/or B3)	18
Mathematical Concepts (B4)	13
Humanities and Arts (C1 and/or C2)	22
Social Sciences (D1, D2, and/or D3)	46
Human Understanding and Development (E)	31

Advanced GE Area	Response Total
Earth and Environment (R)	16
Self, Society, and Equality in the U.S. (S)	31
Culture, Civilization, and Global Understanding (V)	18
Written Communication II (Z)	27

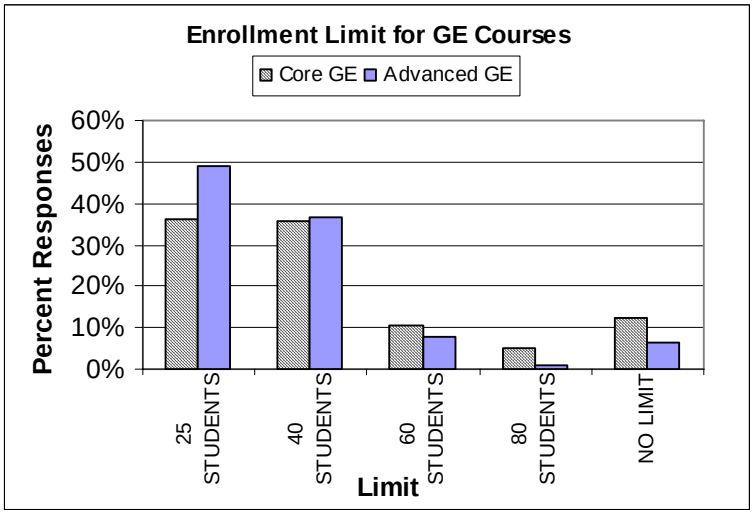
When asked, "why do you teach GE courses, responses varied across rank. A significantly higher percentage of tenured faculty teach GE as a result of personal preference than either non-tenured faculty or lecturers. In terms of the "other" category, about half of the respondents (27 total) indicated that it was a combination of preference and departmental decision. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Responses based on rank for why professors teach GE courses



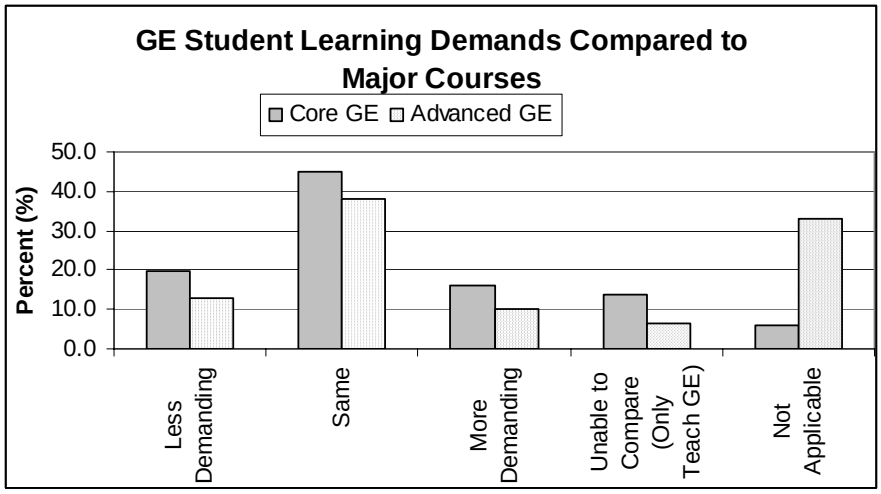
There were two questions relating to enrollment limits, one for CORE GE and one for Advanced. Areas that already impose limits were excluded from the questions (A1, A2, A3, C3, and Z). It is clear from the data that the vast majority believe no GE course should have more than 40 students, with close to 50% indicating Advanced GE courses should have no more than 25. (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Responses on Enrollment Limits for GE Courses



A majority indicated that GE courses are at least as demanding, in terms of student learning, as are major courses (taking into account the difference in discipline backgrounds). Over 67% chose the same or more demanding than major courses for Core and 51% for Advanced GE. (Figure 3)

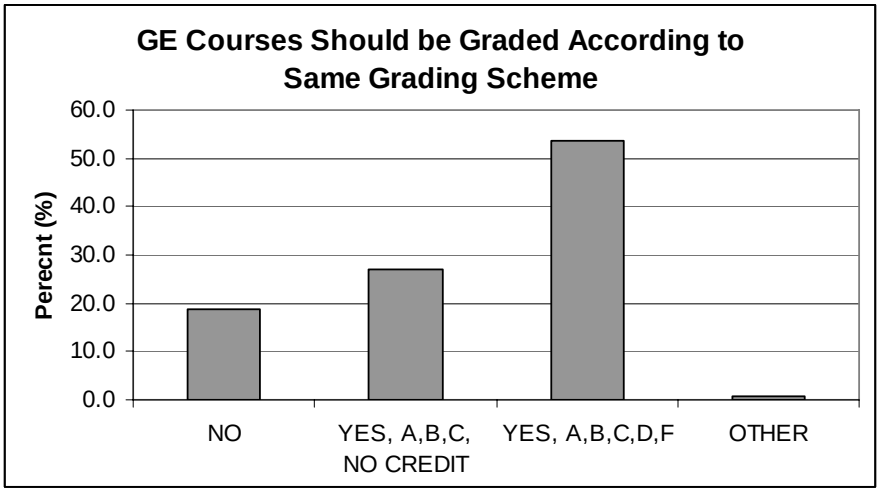
Figure 3: Responses on Student Learning Demands for GE Courses in Comparison with Major Courses



Sixty-six percent of respondents felt that including the student learning objectives from the GE Guidelines should be required on GE syllabi (greensheets).

Fifty-five percent indicated that all GE courses should be graded the same, using an A, B, C, D, F scheme. Only 19% felt they should not all be graded the same. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Responses on Grading Scheme for GE Courses



Opinion was quite split on limiting the number of GE requirements that a student may satisfy from any one department. Fifty-percent felt there should be a limit, while an equal number opposed any such limit.

The last two questions on the survey required written responses. Table 1 summarizes the 121 responses to "what do you like about teaching GE courses?"

Table 1: What Faculty Like About Teaching GE Courses

Response Theme	Percent
Diverse background of students	52%
Watching students develop/learn/be exposed to new material	18%
Exposing students to "my discipline"	9%
Very little/nothing	2%

Table 2 summarizes the 120 responses to "What do you dislike about teaching GE courses?"

Table 2: What Faculty Dislike About Teaching GE Courses

Response Theme	Percent
Students unprepared/writing issues	28%
Student lack of interest	19%
Paperwork/bureaucracy/assessment	18%
Don't dislike anything	4%