GENERAL EDUCATION 2000 – A NATIONAL SURVEY:
HOW GENERAL EDUCATION CHANGED
BETWEEN 1989 AND 2000

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ABSTRACT

This national study describes changes in general education practice between 1989 and 2000. General education has been a formal part of the typical American baccalaureate since the early 1900s (Cohen, 1998). Periodic reviews of general education are conducted. Since the late 1960s, these reviews have occurred in approximately ten year intervals. Dressel (1967), Blackburn et al. (1976), Toombs, et al. (1989), and Gaff (1991) examined general education across American higher education institutions. These studies trace the development of general education through the 1990s. The current study adds to this chronicling of general education.

Undergraduate education in the United States was critically examined through a series of national reports between 1985 and 1995. Through these reports were directed at undergraduate education, they had implications for general education (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). The reports lamented increasing fragmentation in the undergraduate curriculum and the loss of a common understanding of the role for general education in the American baccalaureate. During the same period access to higher education increased resulting in an increasingly diverse student population served by increasingly diverse institutions of higher education. These changes suggest that general education may have changed and support the need for the present study.

The study is exploratory and attempts to discover how general education changed and what influenced change in general education curricula. A national survey of Chief Academic Officers and a national survey of General Education Administrators solicited responses from those campus leaders most familiar with general education on their
campuses. The study collected perceptual and behavioral information to determine the status of general education and to compare its findings to studies by Toombs, et al. (1989) and Gaff (1991). The findings of the study suggest that general education practice changed in the period and that it is continuing to change. The primary aims of the reforms were making general education programs more coherent, meeting changing student needs, and updating programs to reflect changing contexts. The study also found that the historical pattern of general education reform occurring in waves, reported by Gaff (1991), changed. The new pattern is one of continuous change. The findings suggest general education programs are more dynamic than in the past. As a result, this study found that general education practice might need to be guided by models that account for interactions between content, faculty, students, and other stake holders and that consider both the curriculum that faculty plan and the curriculum that students receive.

The study suggests that two models be used to guide general education scholarship and practice – an academic planning model (Stark and Lattuca, 1997) and a model of curricula as communication (Ratcliff, 2000, 2001). Together, these models consider both the curriculum faculty plan and the curriculum students receive.
Table of Contents

List of Figures....................................................................................................................... viii
List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... ix
Acknowledgements................................................................................................................x

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION ......................................................................................... 1

General Education’s Historical Role in American Undergraduate Education ..............5
General Education’s Current Role in Undergraduate Education......................................10
The Purpose of the Study ......................................................................................................12
Research Questions .............................................................................................................14
Design of the Study .............................................................................................................14
Definition of Key Terms .....................................................................................................14
Limitations of the Study ......................................................................................................15
Assumptions of the Study ....................................................................................................16
Significance of the Study .....................................................................................................16

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE ..................................................17

Overview ...............................................................................................................................17
General Education in the American Baccalaureate Degree ..............................................18
Context and General Education .......................................................................................21
Educational Philosophy and General Education ...............................................................23
Unresolved Tensions in General Education .......................................................................27
Undergraduate Education Reform Movement and General Education (1984-1994) ..28
Recent Studies of General Education ................................................................. 35

The Toombs, et al. (1989) Catalog Study .......................................................... 40

The Gaff (1991) National Study ...................................................................... 45

Curricular Models and General Education .................................................... 49

Conceptual Framework .................................................................................. 52

Summary ........................................................................................................... 55

CHAPTER 3: DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ....................................................... 57

Purpose of the Study ....................................................................................... 57

Research Questions ......................................................................................... 57

Research Question 1 ...................................................................................... 58

Research Question 2 ...................................................................................... 59

Research Question 3 ...................................................................................... 59

Research Design ............................................................................................. 60

Sources of Data ............................................................................................... 62

Survey Design and Development ................................................................ 62

Sampling ......................................................................................................... 65

Data Gathering Procedures .......................................................................... 66

Analysis of Data ............................................................................................. 67

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS ..................................................................................... 72

Introduction ................................................................................................... 72
Research Question 1 ................................................................. 72
Research Question 2 ................................................................. 77
Research Question 3 ................................................................. 91
Summary ................................................................. 100

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS ......................... 101
Conclusions about changes in General Education between 1989 and 2000 .......... 101
Implications for Theory and Practice ........................................... 110
Needs for Future Research ........................................................ 122

REFERENCES ................................................................. 134

APPENDIX A: Invitation email and Informed Consent Form ....................... 148
APPENDIX B: Chief Academic Officer Survey ...................................... 150
APPENDIX C: General Education Administrator Survey .......................... 157
APPENDIX D: Questions Developed from Prior Studies .......................... 169
APPENDIX E: Samples for CAO 2000 and GEA 2000 ............................ 170
APPENDIX F: Areas Emphasized in General Education Program ............... 173
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Ideologies and Models for General Education Curricula ..................34
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Year General Education was Last Revised .............................................73
Table 4.2 Year General Education Last Revised by Institutional Class .............74
Table 4.3 Institutional Review of General Education by Institutional Class ......74
Table 4.4 Planned Revisions to General Education .............................................75
Table 4.5 Structural Elements of General Education Programs .......................78
Table 4.6 Extent to Which Program Possesses Curricular Innovations ..........79
Table 4.7 General Education Areas Reviewed .................................................81
Table 4.8 Stages of General Education Reform ..............................................82
Table 4.9 Assessment and Implementation of General Education Change .......83
Table 4.10 Assessment at the Course Level .......................................................85
Table 4.11 Credit Hours Required for BA, BS, and General Education ..........87
Table 4.12 Comparison of General Education Distribution .............................88
Table 4.13 Reported Influence of Accrediting Agencies on General Education ..93
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Chapter 1
INTRODUCTION

This study examines how general education curriculum changed between 1989 and 2000. This chapter discusses the role of general education in American undergraduate degrees and the need to examine how general education changed between 1989 and 2000. It also provides an overview of the research design, specifies study limitations, and defines key terms. Chapter 2 builds on this foundation and reviews selected literature pertinent to general education, particularly studies that described the context for changes in general education between the years 1989 and 2000. Chapter 2 also describes recent studies of general education and discusses curricular models proposed to inform research and guide undergraduate education practice. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study, and Chapter 4 presents the findings. Chapter 5 draws conclusions based on these findings, discusses implications of those conclusions, and describes areas for future research to inform general education practice.

General education curriculum is an integral part of the American undergraduate education course of study. A principal aim of general education is providing some common knowledge for all undergraduate students. Harper’s founding of the Junior College at the University of Chicago (1892) and the founding of the General College at the University of Minnesota (1932) established this aim (Ratcliff, 1997, p. 141). The formalization of general education as a component of the undergraduate degree occurred in the early 20th century (Cohen, 1998). Chapter 2 discusses how and why this formalization occurred. General education endured periods of increased and decreased
emphasis (Gaff, 1991) and countervailing pressures of expanded disciplinary knowledge and increased student diversity (Gaff, 1991; Stark and Lattuca, 1997).

General education is periodically studied. Dressel (1968), Blackburn et al. (1976), Toombs et al. (1988) and Gaff (1991) examined general education across American higher education institutions. Collectively these studies described how general education changed nationally from the 1960s through the end of the 1980s. The Toombs, et al. (1989) and Gaff (1991) study were the last national studies of general education. The purpose of this study is to explore how general education changed between 1989 and 2000.

General education operates in an institutional context unique to individual colleges and universities. Each institution differs by educational philosophy or combination of philosophies, students served, programs offered, constituencies served, institutional mission, and other factors (Hawthorne 1997). Although each curriculum differs, American Baccalaureate degrees share similar structures consisting of both general and specialized study (Stark and Lattuca, 1997; El-Khawas, E., 1990). The typical structure of Baccalaureate degrees is about 120 semester credits (180 quarter credits) in which about 33% to 40% is general education and the remaining 60% to 66% is divided between specialized study and electives or other college-wide requirements (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 53). Therefore, the present study discusses general education both as a distinct component of undergraduate education within higher education institutions and as a common component across colleges and universities.

Defining general education specifically in an institutional context and broadly across institutions creates tension. This tension is evident in the early writings on general
education. For example, *General Education in a Free Society* (Harvard Committee on General Education, 1946) discussed the role of general education in the undergraduate curriculum and proposed a general education curriculum for Harvard. This Committee’s report, considered an early landmark in the literature found it was futile to “…impose a single program of general education upon all institutions” (p. 177); however the Report’s characterization of general education provided a basis for defining general education similarly across institutions in the undergraduate degree after World War II (Ratcliff, 1997b).

The Harvard Committee found that a principal aim for general education at Harvard was to prepare students for responsible citizenry in a free society. The Harvard Report influenced general education practice and its implications for both the content of general education and the relationship of general education to the undergraduate degree continued beyond the post-war period (Ratcliff, 1997b). They found that general education did not end where specialized education began. Their finding highlights a second source of tension in undergraduate education existed between general and specialized education. Stark and Lattuca (1997) found that the challenge of balancing general and specialized education was initially inspired by changing societal needs for undergraduate education and “tension between students’ backgrounds, interests, and precollege preparation, on the one hand, and professors’ judgments about the preservation, transmission, and creation of knowledge on the other” (pp. 46-47). Gaff (1991) found emphasis on general education occurs in waves.

The Harvard Report (referred to as the Redbook) increased interest in general education in the 1940s. The Amherst College Commission on Long Range Planning and
the 1947 Truman Commission report, *Higher Education for Democracy* reinforced this renewed interest in general education (Ratcliff, 1997b; Stark and Lattuca, 1997). These reports found general education to be a necessary curricular component to prepare students for citizenship in a democracy. They also found that the aim of general education during the early post-War period was to develop in students, attitudes, behaviors, and skills deemed important for participation in American society.

In the following decades higher education institutions diversified as a result of changes in the number and diversity of students served by higher education (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). Changes in student populations enrolling in colleges expanded the types of higher education institutions in the United States and increased the educational offerings in existing colleges and universities (Cohen, 1998). As a result, from the 1950s to 1970s the aims for general education extended beyond preparing students for citizenship in a democracy. Despite the changes in American higher education and growing purposes for general education, general education curricula still possessed a number of common characteristics by the 1980s. Gaff (1983, pp. 7-8) found the following characteristics:

- It is rooted in the liberal arts and sciences
- It stresses breadth of knowledge, languages, and methodologies
- It strives for integration, synthesis, and cohesion of learning
- It encourages appreciation of one’s heritage and of other cultures
- It examines values and controversial issues
- It prizes a common educational experience for all students
- It expects mastery of linguistic, analytic, and computational skills
- It fosters personal development and an expanded view of self

Do general education programs continue to share these characteristics in 2000? Are new common characteristics of general education emerging? This study answers these

**General Education’s Historical Role in American Undergraduate Education**

Critics in the late 19th and early 20th centuries found that the undergraduate degree had lost meaning and that the undergraduate curriculum was in chaos (Cohen, 1998). These critics were concerned that that two students could complete bachelor’s degrees without ever taking a common course (Cohen 1998, p. 142) and they believed that the “…the expectations for the learning attained by a bachelor’s degree holder became totally vague” (Cohen, 1998, p. 142). These concerns resurfaced in the 1980s and 1990s as evidenced by a series of critical reports. These reports found undergraduate education to be in disarray and that baccalaureate education had lost meaning (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). Reports issued between the 1980s and 1990s implicitly or explicitly implicated general education arguing that general education provided meaning for undergraduate education (Stark and Lattuca, 1997).

In the 1990s, students and higher education institutions grew in diversity and post-secondary education was increasingly considered an entitlement rather than a privilege (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). However, as at the beginning of the century, pressure to define a common education for all students continued.

Expanding roles for American higher education in the late 19th century predicated the loss of a common definition of the bachelor’s degree in the early 20th century. The classical college was the predominant conceptualization of undergraduate education at the beginning of the 19th century (Veysey, 1965). The classical college stressed the role
of higher education to rigorously train the mind. The Yale Report of 1828 described the philosophy that was the basis of the classical college. “The two great points to be gained in intellectual culture, are the discipline and the furniture of the mind; expanding its powers, and storing it with knowledge”. Early in the 19th century, new purposes for undergraduate education emerged and challenged the classical liberal arts concepts (Veysey, 1965; Geiger, 1995, 1986; Stark and Lattuca, 1997).

These challenges to classical education were well established and discussions of general versus specialized education became polarized at the end of the 19th century (Cohen, 1998; Stark and Lattuca, 1997; Veysey, 1965). Three distinct missions for undergraduate education were distinguished at the end of the 19th century (Veysey, 1965; Stark and Lattuca, 1997). Institutions promoted utilitarian, research, and liberal education missions (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). These distinct missions had implications for general education curricula.

Utilitarian missions saw the role of college was to “prepare citizens to participate in the nations economic and commercial life” (Stark and Lattuca, 1996, p. 46). The utilitarian mission promoted career-oriented programs buttressed with general education electives (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). While Stark and Lattuca (1997) found The Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1862 provided a framework for utilitarian education in state institutions (Stark and Lattuca, 1997), the language of the Morrill Act indicated that curricula in these colleges could have additional aims in support of preparing citizens for work.

…each State which may take and claim the benefit of this act, to the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college where the leading object shall be,
without excluding other scientific and classical studies, and including military
tactics, to teach such branches of learning as related to agriculture and the mechanic
arts, in such manner as the legislatures of the States may respectively prescribe, in
order to promote the liberal and practical education of the industrial classes in the
several pursuits and professions in life... (italics added) (Morrill Act, 1862, p. 262)
This landmark legislation held that education for the “industrial classes” should promote
both liberal and practical education supporting the idea that undergraduate curriculum
was both general and specialized.

The research mission grew from the German model of higher education and was
dedicated to producing new knowledge. In Germany, the research mission was
associated with to graduate level institutions. American colleges and universities adopted
research missions that housed undergraduate education as well (Stark and Lattuca, 1997).
The research mission emphasized producing new knowledge, empowered the faculty to
organize in disciplinary units, and established a paradigm organizing general education as
distributional requirements in disciplinary units (Cohen, 1998). A tension existed in
institutions with research missions that would define the undergraduate degree as a
combination of general and specialized education (Cohen, 1998; Stark and Lattuca,
1997).

The third mission in the late 19th century arose from the classical liberal education
model. The resultant curriculum stressed understanding and improving society. It
sustained the belief that studying classic authors improved the ability of students to think,
appreciate knowledge and serve (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). Thus, this mission stressed
general education over specialization.
The three missions of 19th century colleges and universities influenced general education in the early 20th century. The competing philosophies and attendant missions for higher education were resolved in part when separate institutions housed research, vocational learning, professional learning and liberal learning. Research universities accomplished the administrative task of managing multiple aims by compartmentalizing the university into multiple academic units (Geiger, 1986). The emergence of scholarly disciplines in the late 19th and early 20th century abetted this compartmentalization (Geiger, 1986).

Universities subdivided into academic units also encouraged general education as a separate curricular element. William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago saw undergraduate education partitioned into junior and senior levels. For Harper, general education was functionally and sequentially foundational for specialized study at the senior level. Gaff (1991) found Harper envisioned a junior college within the university, led by its own faculty and committed to a vision of “…integrated curriculum, team-planned courses, original texts, and interdisciplinary study” (p. 153).

Other colleges promoted the idea that general education would exist as a college serving lower division undergraduates. The University of Minnesota established the General College as a two-year general education division in 1932. Like Chicago, it was a lower division college providing the first two years of collegiate education.

Other conceptualizations of general education emerged in this period. Meiklejohn perceived the problem with undergraduate education was the prevailing structure because the course was too short for meaningful learning (Matthews, et al., 1997). Meiklejohn established the Experimental College at the University of Wisconsin in 1927. The
Experimental College offered an alternate structure and pedagogy for general education comprised of:

“… a two-year undergraduate experience in which students and their faculty explored the values and ideals of democracy by reading and discussing classic works of ancient Greece in the first year, comparing that culture with the study of contemporary American in the second year, and grounding their understanding in community based work” (Matthews, et al., 1997, p. 458).

In the 1930s and 40s Columbia and the University of Chicago led a self proclaimed “general education movement” (Stevens, 2001). John Erskine, a generalist scholar at Columbia proposed a two-year honors seminar in the humanities in 1920 and developed a list of 50 to 60 great works of literature for the seminar. Mortimer Adler was among the students in the seminar and brought the idea to Hutchins at the University of Chicago. In the 1930s and 1940s, Hutchins established a “common core” at Chicago based on the list of “great books” proposed by Erskine. Board and faculty resistance to Hutchins general education vision compromised his plan (Stevens, 2000, p. 171). Hutchins as Chairman of the Board of St. John's College introduced a great books general education program in 1937 (Stevens, 2000, p. 172). Despite these innovations in general education, by the early 1940s a set of distributions in the humanities, sciences, social sciences, mathematics, and fine arts was the standard form for general (Cohen, 1998).

In 1946, The Harvard Committee on General Education published a landmark report on general education. The Harvard report argued that general education should provide both “an adequate groundwork for the choice of a specialty” and “a milieu in which the
specialty can develop its fullest possibilities” (p. 195). They found general education to have specific relevance to subsequent study (Harvard Committee, 1946, p. 196):

General education should not be limited to a block of courses which the student is to take and get over with in order to go on with the more interesting and significant special study. It should be a pervasive and a lasting influence as well as a set of course requirements. (p. 196).

American higher education expanded after WWII, the diversity of students grew, and general education debates were renewed. While these innovations and debates were important, discussion of them was beyond the scope of the present study. However, the tensions discussed in this chapter influenced debates and subsequent general education innovations. Pressure to provide common meaning for undergraduate education and the challenges of balancing general and specialized education influenced the role of general education in the American baccalaureate degree. The following section describes the role of general education in the undergraduate degree in the 1980s and 1990s.

**General Education’s Current Role in Undergraduate Education**

By 1990, 86% of colleges and universities had formal general education requirements for all students (El-Khawas, 1990). While general education was a significant part of most undergraduate curricula the rationale, structure, and process for general education were often unclear, unspecified, or contested. Rudolph (1997) described general education as a “slippery concept” that could be defined in a variety of ways.
The multiplicity of philosophies, purposes, and attendant structures led several observers to conclude that general education was in disarray (Levine, 1985; Ratcliff and Associates, 1995; Ratcliff, 1997b). The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1977) found general education to be a disaster area and suggested baccalaureate education lost meaning because common learning experiences did not exist.

This perceived disarray led institutions to reform general education. Ratcliff (1997b) viewed the reform of general education as:

… an institutional attempt to make sense of this disarray – this moving target – we call the undergraduate curriculum. Using the full undergraduate curriculum as its foundation, general education articulates to students and faculty alike the academic purposes and policies of the institution. It proposes that by selecting certain courses from the aforementioned array, certain types of learning regarded as important by the institution will be achieved. (p. 157).

Ratcliff’s description of general education is important to the present research for several reasons. First, general education curricula exist in an institutional context. They are a component of undergraduate education. Second, institutions select courses that support academic purposes and policies deemed important by the institution. Finally, general education provides a common definition of what a baccalaureate degree should mean. The role of general education providing meaning to baccalaureate education existed at the beginning of the century. Cohen (1998) found the formalization of general education in the undergraduate degree in the early 1900s was an attempt to define what a bachelor’s degree should mean.
Similarly, Stark and Lattuca (1997) found that calls for reform at the end of the 20th century saw general education’s role in undergraduate education was to provide common learning that helped define what a baccalaureate degree meant. The idea that general education provides meaning for undergraduate education assumes general education curricula serve a communicative role. This role is to transmit a definition of what a baccalaureate degree meant to faculty, students, and other constituents. Stark and Lattuca (1997) found that one-way communication did not promote meaning because faculty, students, employers, and society hold different educational purposes. They found these additional perspectives should be included in planning curricula (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). Ratcliff (2000) also saw curricula as two-way communication. He found understanding how faculty transmit curricula and how students receive curricula to be necessary to promote curricular quality.

**The Purpose of the Study**

This study examines changes in general education over the last 10 years. It compares commonalities and differences in general education practice across institutions and compared these to the last two major studies of general education: Toombs, et al. (1989) and Gaff (1991). Prior studies of general education examined general education practice at a specific point in time (Dressel, 1968; Blackburn, et al., 1976; Toombs, et al., 1989; and Gaff, 1991). The present study adds to this list of periodic reviews of the status and condition of general education.

This study examines structural changes in general education within the context of a conventional academic planning model for two reasons. First, national studies of general education through the 1990s that provided a benchmark for this study were examined
through an academic planning model; therefore, using this model allowed comparison.

Second, curriculum development has relied on the paradigm of curriculum as a plan or design for learning (Diamond, 1989; Stark and Lattuca, 1997; Toombs, 1977-78).

The academic planning model has informed both research and practice; however, in the 1990s researchers began to examine the communicative role of undergraduate curricula (e.g., Howard, 1991; Applebee, 1996; Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997; Hayworth and Conrad, 1997; Ratcliff, 2000). Practitioners reported increases in thematic organizations of general education (Gaff, 1991) and researchers found thematic organizations emerging in practice (Toombs et al., 1989). Advancing themes to explain the purpose of course requirements may suggest that practitioners were more aware of communicative roles general education played in giving meaning to undergraduate education. In addition, institutional case analysis illustrated how resource dependent New England higher education institutions use general education to communicate the distinctiveness of their organizations to secure additional resources (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997).

While attention to communicative roles for general education increased in research and practice, the present study relies primarily on a status survey to describe the current structure and purpose of general education. However, Chapter 5 analyzes the findings of the study to determine how a communicative model (Ratcliff, 2000, 2001) and a dynamic structural model (Stark and Lattuca, 1997) might improve general education practice and inform future research on general education curricula.
Research Questions

Three research questions guided the present study to examine how general education changed between 1989 and 2000.

1. Do institutional leaders perceive that general education changed between 1989 and 2000, or that it is presently changing?
2. In what ways did the structure and practice of general education change between 1989 and 2000?
3. What were the apparent influences on general education practice between 1989 and 2000?

Design of the Study

The study is a cross-sectional survey of baccalaureate granting institutions of higher education that are members of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The study uses two surveys, one administered to Chief Academic Officers and another administered to General Education Administrators, to gather data on how general education changed between 1989 and 2000 (Appendix B and Appendix C). Chapter 3 discusses the design of the study in detail.

Definition of Key Terms

a. Curriculum: Curriculum is defined as the formal arrangement of educational experiences undergraduate students pursue at American colleges and universities offering baccalaureate and greater than baccalaureate degrees to complete baccalaureate degrees (Ratcliff, 1997a, pp. 6-26).
b. General Education: General Education is defined as the formal component of undergraduate education outside of the major, specialization, or discipline all students are required to take.

c. Conceptual Framework: A conceptual framework is defined as a device or organizational system used to design and interpret research (Rodman, 1984).

d. Model: A model is defined as a device constructed to simulate an object (in the present research – undergraduate curriculum and general education curriculum) and manipulate data to reach conclusions (Cronbach, 1982, pp. 158-161).

**Limitations of Study**

The study is a cross-sectional design and the data is limited to the specific point in time data was gathered. Second, the surveys ask respondents to describe general education at their institutions. Respondents are either chief academic officers or directors of general education or both. Their positions as organizational leaders potentially biased the information given.

A third limitation of the study is it collects the perspectives of only two stakeholder groups in the curricular change process. Perspectives of students, faculty and other constituents are beyond the scope of the study. This prevents an examination of how faculty, students, content, and purpose interact. However, the responses of CAOs and GEAs to open-ended survey questions provides a basis for analyzing if general education leaders recognize a communicative role of general education or if they describe general education as interactions between faculty, learners, and content.

The survey is limited to baccalaureate-granting institutions with membership in the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). The AAC&U is a
proponent of general and liberal education resulting in a biased sample. The survey may be further limited primarily to those individuals capable of responding to an email and Internet based survey.

Assumptions of the Study

The study assumes that people answer the questions posed on the survey forthrightly and that the documents analyzed were accurate at the time of the study.

Significance of the Study

This study promises to add to the literature on general education by analyzing the status of general education at the end of the 20th century, and comparing these findings to the previous studies, Toombs et al. (1989) and Gaff (1991). Just as the Toombs and Gaff studies drew comparisons of their findings to previous studies, the present study extends the study of general education on a national level and contributes to a chronicle that describes how general education is evolving. Finally, the present study presents alternative models for examining general education and understanding how general education practice and research might be improved.

This chapter established the need and purpose for the present study, summarized its research questions, its design, its assumptions and limitations, and provided definitions of key terms. The next chapter reviews selected literature representing the extant knowledge regarding general education curriculum and curriculum change over the period studied.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF SELECTED LITERATURE

Overview

Chapter 1 identified the need and purpose for the study, described research questions, outlined the design and methodology, and defined key terms, assumptions and limitations. Chapter 2 reviews selected literature pertinent to the study of curricular change, and general education curriculum specifically. Literature was selected from published books, dissertations, educational conference papers, and refereed journals identified in Educational Resources Information Center, Dissertation Abstract Index, ProQuest Digital Data Bases, Pennsylvania State University Libraries, and Center for the Study of Higher Education Library.

The literature selected for this study explores how general education changed between 1989 and 2000. Literature chosen described the history and philosophies of general education; established the status of general education at the beginning of the period studied; examined how general education was historically studied; examined curricular models; and, projected how leading scholars anticipated general education would change during the 1990s. This literature review is primarily limited to that literature published between 1980 and 2000; literature published before that period is limited to seminal works on general education, undergraduate education, and curriculum; major national studies of general education between 1950 and 1980; and federal legislative reports that directly influenced general education practice.
The literature reviewed describes the state of general education practice at the end of the 1980s providing a foundation for answering the guiding question for the study: How did general education change between 1989 and 2000?

This review examines literature describing educational philosophies that influence the nature and development of general education. In addition, this chapter reviews literature pertaining to curriculum research and development to identify alternative ways to study curricular change. This chapter develops a conceptual framework for analyzing the resultant data of this study relative to contemporary models of higher education curriculum. This framework guided the development of the surveys used, the analyses performed, and the conclusions drawn in the study.

**General Education in the American Baccalaureate Degree**

The role of general education in the undergraduate course of study was unsettled at the end of the 1980s. Literature focused on issues of purpose, structure, process, and evaluation. Published articles on undergraduate education implicitly assumed general education was a central concept in post-secondary education. General education and specialized study are juxtaposed components of the undergraduate degree. For example, Gaff proposed that general education and specialized education should support each other in a quality undergraduate program; however, he concluded balancing the two to be challenging (Gaff, 1991, p. 87).

That balancing general and specialized education would be challenging was foreshadowed circumstances that gave rise to the general education idea. Cohen (1998, pp. 142-151) discussed the origins of formalized general education in the American undergraduate course of study. He found that critics of undergraduate education in the
early contended that the American Bachelor’s degree had lost meaning (Cohen, 1998, p. 142). The splintering of knowledge into “miniscule pieces”, the elective idea, the concepts of freedom to study and freedom to learn, and the “organization of curriculum into structural units” supported the power base of faculty in specialized disciplinary departments and resulted in a fractionated curriculum (Cohen, 1998, pp. 142-143). The reaction to criticisms that the bachelor’s degree meant nothing other than “…a person had accumulated 120 or so college credits, not necessarily even from the same institution…” coalesced into the general education idea prominent in the 1920s and 1930s (Cohen, 1998, pp. 142-143).

The emergence of general education programs in undergraduate education in the late 1920s and early 1930s was a formal compromise promoting some common meaning for bachelor’s degrees (Cohen, 1998). Its standard form at most American institutions of higher education by the 1940s was a distribution of courses in the humanities, social sciences, sciences, and arts (Cohen, 1998). This structure retained the power base in disciplinary departments at colleges and universities, answered critics’ complaints that the undergraduate degree had lost meaning, and established general education as the common part of the undergraduate curricula that defined what a bachelors degree meant (Cohen, 1998). However, the assumption that general education gave meaning to the Bachelor’s degree was untested. Studies were not identified that examined how or if general education provided such meaning.

While the aims of the compromise establishing general education were to resolve tension between general and specialized education and to find balance between them, these tensions continued. The Harvard Committee on General Education (1945)
advocated the integration of general and specialized study arguing general learning did not end when specialized learning began (Harvard Committee on General Education, 1946). Gaff (1991) concluded that curricular change in general education is constrained by competition between general and specialized education within undergraduate degrees (Gaff, 1991) indicating tension between general and specialized education continued in the 1990s.

Institutions departing from the standard distributional form of general education in the 1930s and 1940s illustrate this tension. Stevens (2001, pp. 165-191) examined the “self proclaimed general education movement” (p. 171) of the 1930s and 1940s led by University of Chicago, Columbia, University of Virginia, and later St. John’s College. She studied the development of the University of Chicago’s common core through archival data at the University of Chicago and reviewed the literature on general education in the first half of the 20th century. From this historical analysis, she portrayed the history and philosophy of this general education movement. These institutions promoted a “common core” of required courses based on a list of “great books” developed by John Erskine at Columbia (Stevens, 2001, pp. 168, 172). These institutions clearly distinguished general study and specialized study in their curricula, instilling a common cultural and intellectual heritage in all students through general education, and reserving specialized study until general studies were complete.

She found that faculty and board opposition resulted in compromising Hutchins vision for general education at the University of Chicago. However, St. John’s College adopted Hutchins vision for general education in 1937 because no forces at the “nearly bankrupt” St. John’s College opposed it (Stevens, 2001, p. 172).
The review of selected literature on the early formalization of general education in the undergraduate degree indicated tension existed between general and specialized education in American undergraduate education between the 1920s and 1940s. Further, this tension was still present in the 1990s and it inhibited general education reform. This tension was especially evident at institutions proposing general and specialized education as separate entities. Finally, while general education proposed to give the American bachelor’s degree meaning in the 1920s and 1930s, no empirical studies explored how or if general education provided meaning to undergraduate education.

**Context and General Education**

In the 1990s, some studies explored how general education made undergraduate study more meaningful. Kanter, Gamson, and London (1997) examined resource dependent New England institutions of higher education using case study methodology. Cases of individual institutions examined relationships between general education and undergraduate education (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997). In reviewing the literature on general education, they concluded that national studies on general education gave the “philosophical merits of various approaches to general education,” but examined general education as an autonomous unit and did not recognize or examine its relationship to the specific context of individual higher education organizations (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997).

They found that contextual factors influencing general education included students, major programs, governing entities, faculty, administration, parents, and the public at large (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997). They also found that local social
and political influences to be inherent in the philosophical, structural, and content frameworks of general education at the individual institutions (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997). However, stakeholders in the process rarely articulated the interaction of political and social influences on philosophy, structure, and content of general education. Rather, they concluded that that resource dependent higher education institution in New England use their general education programs as a means to differentiate undergraduate education at their institutions from others with which they compete for resources. Some institutions were more successful than others in advancing the distinctive qualities of their general education programs (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997). Thus, they concluded general education was implicitly contextual in resource dependent New England colleges and universities. Contextual influence on general education varied due to both local and external constituents.

Most studies of undergraduate curriculum selected for review in the present study examined programmatic differences related to institutional type (Gaff, 1991; Toombs, et al., 1989; Lewis, Farris, and Westat, Inc., 1989; Blackburn et al., 1976; Dressel, 1968). Institutional type, while important, was but one aspect of context (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997). Institutional type did explain some differences in the nature of interactions between faculty, students, and the material used in general education programs. However, institutional type did not explain how constituents made interpretations of general education.

Prior studies of general education described the historical development of competing philosophical paradigms (Gaff, 1985; Howard, 1991; Fanelli, 1997) and how the structure and content of general education programs changed (Gaff, 1991; Toombs,
1989). Also, studies of general education at individual institutions observed changes in
the content, structure, evaluation, and philosophy of general education programs, giving
context beyond faculty or administrator perceptions of general education at the
institutions (Blois, 1987; Dahlberg, 1994; Davis, 1996; Moloney, 1992). These prior
studies examined the relationship of some contextual variables to general education;
however, they did not consider how these contextual variables contributed to general
education providing meaning to undergraduate education.

The balance of the literature review examined how social and political forces interact
to influence the philosophy, content, and structure of general education. These
interactions shaped the local contexts in which general education programs operated and
framed the information students, parents, and other constituents used to interpret the
meaning of general education.

**Educational Philosophy and General Education**

The social and political context of the institution shapes the philosophies of
education it adopts (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997; Furhman, 1997). In turn, these
philosophies of education influence the purpose, organization, instruction and evaluation
of general education (Ratcliff, 1997b, pp. 154-159; Howard, 1991; Gaff, 1983; Levine,
1978).

Most colleges and universities had adopted multiple and competing philosophies of
undergraduate education by the late 19th to early 20th centuries (Fuhrmann, 1997; Veysey,
1965). Rival philosophies of undergraduate education coexisted in pockets of research,
utility, and liberal culture at most colleges and universities (Veysey, 1965). Prior
research has categorized general education philosophies to better understand the relationship between general education curricula and undergraduate degrees.

Levine (1978, p. 8) suggested four underlying philosophies of general education: perennialism, essentialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. Perennialism was founded on the assumption that the substance of education is everlasting, that the ability to reason was what distinguished humans from other animals, that education should be principally concerned with training rational faculties of the mind, and that people everywhere were alike. Perennialist educators find the aim of education is training of the rational faculties based on the study of immutable and universal truths is best acquired through the study of the “Great Books”. (Levine, 1978, p. 8)

Essentialists believe an essential or prescribed body of knowledge best conveys the heritage of humankind. Essentialists rely on abstract or conceptual coursework more than applied or practical subject matter. There are multiple forms of essentialist curricula. They tend to use conventional pedagogy, are teacher-centered, and assume learning is hard work (Levine, 1978, p. 8). Core curricula are often preferred (Levine, 1978, p. 8)

Life experience grounds progressive education. It is student centered in that student interest determines the direction of education, views the instructor as an expert and advisor who guides students, and often is problem oriented rather based in subject matter. Progressivism emphasized methods of critical thought over bodies of knowledge (Levine, 1978, pp. 6-7). Reconstructionists accept the progressive design of education but add an emphasis on reconstructing or improving society.
Gaff (1983) identified four philosophical approaches to general education: idealism, progressivism, essentialism, and pragmatism. Idealism held that the goal of undergraduate education was liberal education, without specific practical or vocational application that prepared students for all of life and that humanistic study, especially in religion and literature was the best means to that end.

Pragmatism held that undergraduate education was pluralistic and complex, composed of multiple disciplines, philosophies, and ways of knowing, that while multiple philosophical and disciplinary communities existed these communities were not mutually exclusive and that pluralism strengthened the academy. Gaff asserted that these philosophies were the most prevalent in general education.

Prior literature suggested that the philosophy of education influenced how curricula were structured. For example, Ratcliff (1997b, p. 155) concluded that perennialists and essentialists favor curricular cannons because they value preserving and transmitting language, knowledge, and values. Levine (1978) suggested that relationships between educational philosophies and decisions to structure curricula as cores, distributional requirements, or free electives.

Newton (2000) proposed in a theoretical essay that despite the “literally thousands of programs, certain illuminating assumptions and patterns emerge” general education operated within one of three broad models: 1) Great Books, 2) Scholarly Discipline, and 3) Effective Citizen (p. 169). “Great Books” models focused on perennial human questions and subsequently the role of general education was to hand on traditions through pivotal ideas as expressed by authors of Western Tradition (Newton, 2000, p. 180). “Scholarly Discipline” models stressed disciplines as ways of understanding the
world through the accumulation of wisdom, that the role of general education was to extend the knowledge and methods of the disciplines through key concepts and models of disciplinary inquiry (Newton, 2000, p. 180). Finally, effective citizen models promoted that education served a self-reforming democracy that general education programs were progressive forces for democratic change through providing knowledge and skills vital to living in and improving modern society. Newton (2000) suggested that familiarity with the three general education programs he proposed provided a context “against which the institution’s current general education program can be analyzed and evaluated and can allow general education reformers to identify more sharply and quickly both their own presuppositions and the assumptions of their colleagues” (p. 181). Implicit in Newton’s finding is that broad philosophies provide a context for organizing general education curricula.

While the studies reviewed above concluded educational philosophy and the curricular structure and the sequence of general education programs are connected, Conrad (1978) argued that broad philosophies were not the basis for curricular organization. Conrad developed case studies through analysis of curricular artifacts and synthesized literature on curricular reform. Based on his research, Conrad concluded the basis of curricula were how knowledge was structured and communicated rather than broad educational philosophies. Conrad’s finding conflicted with other studies reviewed indicating that prior research had lead one investigator to the view that general education may exist in the context of knowledge structures independent of philosophy. Other research indicated that knowledge structures differed between disciplines (Berkenkotter
and Huckin, 1995) suggesting that disciplinary knowledge may be a significant factor in how students understand general education.

This section of the literature review established: a) that context may influence either philosophy or structure, b) that philosophy may influence structure and organization, and c) conflicting philosophies create unresolved tensions in the curriculum, and d) the disciplinary knowledge structure may affect how students understand general education. The following section describes how unresolved tensions manifested between 1984 and 1994.

**Unresolved Tensions in General Education**

In its report, *A new vitality in General Education*, the Association of American Colleges (1988; now the AAC&U) concluded there were unresolved tensions in general education reform efforts. Tensions exist over what to teach and how to teach; whether great books or contemporary literature should be selected as texts; how much and what type of in-class and out-of-class learning should be included; how to best address individual and community needs in the curriculum; and what students want and what institutions think students need (p. 5). The report concluded that these tensions fomented the need for continuous reform of the general education program.

These curricular tensions were manifest in public discussion of undergraduate curricula during the late 1980s and early 1990s. Newton (2000) also examined the potential for conflict in general education reform. His theoretical essay proposed four dimensions or types of tensions confronted general education reformers: 1. Unity versus fragmentation (knowledge), 2. Breadth versus depth (student learning), 3. Generalists
versus specialists (faculty competence), and 4. Western culture versus cultural diversity (content). He concluded that these tensions, left unresolved inhibited general education reform.

In the last 15 years of the twentieth century, internal and external constituents of higher education debated the quality of undergraduate curriculum. These debates extended into public discourse through a series of national calls for reform by several national organizations. Much of the debate involved general education implicitly or explicitly. This research examined the undergraduate reform movement as it related to general education below.

**Undergraduate Education Reform Movement and General Education**

*(1984-1994)*

Over 20 national reports and proposals for reform between 1984 and 1994 criticized undergraduate education (Stark and Lattuca, 1996). Though the majority of the reports targeted broad curricular reform of undergraduate degrees, they implicitly or explicitly implicated general education in the American baccalaureate. Many of these reports suggested a lack of common learning experiences in baccalaureate education and echoed the criticisms of undergraduate education at the beginning of the twentieth century (Chapter 2). The reports also claimed undergraduate education had lost coherence and meaning. This study reviewed selected reports from the reform period. These reports were selected to illustrate general education was implicitly or explicitly a target of their criticism.
National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) issued *To Reclaim a Legacy: A Report on the Humanities in Higher Education* (Bennett, 1984). It claimed pressures to allow students to choose their course of study had led to a disintegration of the humanities core. Bennett proposed returning to an orderly and purposeful curriculum in a “great books” tradition that emphasized traditional western values.

Appearing in the same year as Bennett, *Involvement in Learning* (National Institute of Education, 1984; (NIE)) also concluded curricula were fragmented. It differed on how to make undergraduate curricula more coherent. It stressed process over content. *Involvement*, was “…sensitive to individual student differences, diversity, and the variety of powerful arguments for alternative approaches to curriculum content” (Eaton, 1991, p. 57). It stated “…clearly expressed, publicly announced, and consistently maintained standards of performance for awarding degrees – standards that are based on societal and institutional definitions of college-level academic learning” promoted unity (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 85). *Involvement* emphasized educational context. Departing from the views of a common learning experience for all students across all institutions, it sought unity within the context of the students served, institutional goals, and societal aims for a collegiate education. The responsibility of colleges was to clearly define and communicate curricular goals and standards.

Reports issued in the period also addressed breadth versus depth. The reform period existed in a societal context of increasing emphasis on the vocational or professional aims of collegiate education. A variation of the student choice movement from the 1960s and 1970s, the 1980s saw student choice manifested in vocational aims of students (Toombs, 1989) rather than social aims of the prior period. As a result, emphasis on the major
combined with fragmentation in general education requirements resulted in a perception that the benefits of breadth in the college curriculum were being lost.

*College: The Undergraduate Experience in America* (Boyer, 1989) and *Integrity in the College Curriculum* (Association of American Colleges, 1985) advocated breadth in the curriculum through common areas of knowledge that defined a college education. Boyer (1989) acknowledged that tensions between the vocational or professional aims of college and the liberal arts existed for over two centuries and argued general education should include seven areas of disciplinary based inquiry. Boyer’s emphasis was on integration between the disciplinary groups within general education and the ability of the major to “enlarge rather than narrow the students’ vision” (Stark and Lattuca, 1997).

*Integrity in the College Curriculum* (Association of American Colleges, 1985) urged the development of student competencies and intellectual abilities over traditional disciplinary knowledge domains. *Integrity* argued nine essential competencies are necessary for a broad and relevant collegiate education. These competencies were inquiry, literacy, understanding numerical data, historical consciousness, science, values, art, international and multicultural experiences, and study in depth (Association of American Colleges, 1985, pp. 15-24).

In 1989, Cheney carried William Bennett’s conceptualization of liberal learning advanced in *To Reclaim a Legacy* into a specific proposal for reforming general education. Cheney (1989) argued a core curriculum should organize material for students to promote a student’s knowledge of literature, philosophy, institutions, and art of their own and other cultures. While *Fifty Hours* shared Bennett’s emphasis on Western
Heritage, and prescribed, a model body of knowledge students should know in common, it also included a multi-cultural requirement.

The argument that general education should be a heritage-based curriculum based on Western values was not limited to Bennett and Cheney. Bloom (1987) believed colleges and universities needed to return to a “great books” philosophy based on Western values. D’Souza (1991) further claimed “that activist faculty and students had split institutions of higher education on moral grounds, charging that universities were structurally racist, sexist, homophobic, and class based” (Garcia and Ratcliff, 1997).

Reports emphasizing “western culture” invigorated pluralist voices to assert the need to move from a monocultural view of general education to a multicultural perspective. The Association of American Colleges and Universities launched a major project in 1993 “American Commitments: Diversity, Democracy, and Liberal Learning” to explore “what higher education’s distinctive responsibilities are in a diverse democracy” (Humphrey’s, 1997, p. v). *American Pluralism and the College Curriculum* (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1995) recommended every institution in the United States include a pluralism course that is “…an extended and comparative exploration of diverse peoples in this society; with significant attention to their differing experiences of United States democracy and the pursuits – sometimes successful, sometimes frustrated – of equal opportunities” (p. 25). This conflict between Western and multicultural philosophies was described by Musil (1997).

The earlier, largely monocultural knowledge base had been presented as complete, eternal, and universal. Its excellence was largely unquestioned, and its origin presumed devoid of contamination by any political viewpoint. The new scholarship
on diversity, coupled with other intellectual movements in the last quarter century, has made it all but impossible to hold such views and still have intellectual integrity.

Eaton (1991) analyzed the reports issued in the 1980s and proposed academic reform, race and finance represented three unresolved agendas. The present research reviewed Eaton’s findings about academic reforms.

Eaton believed that the critical reports issued in the 1980s represented competing ideologies for undergraduate curricula. Three major approaches to academic values and direction were apparent during the 1980s:

(1) Preference for the ideological stance of the Reagan administration,

(2) Support for the standard practices of the higher education community as they had been developed during the 1960s and 1970s, and

(3) A “third agenda,” or significant disagreement with each of the other approaches primarily because these approaches did not adequately address the issues of social change needed for true education reform (Eaton, 1991, p. 54).

These three major approaches represented political agendas (Eaton, 1991). The first approach based on the stance of the Reagan administration was a “conservative agenda”. Many higher education leaders supported the “establishment agenda” It sought to maintain the institutional and curricular conventions established in the late 1960s and 1970s. “Radical education thinkers” (p. 54) who disagreed with both “conservative agenda” and “establishment agenda” represented a third agenda (Eaton, 1991).

Eaton (1991) believed that Allan Bloom and E.D. Hirsch were “prominent examples of 1980s conservative thinking about higher education” and that they offered curriculum based solutions to higher education problems (p. 75). Hirsch and Bloom argued the
solution to the present problems in higher education was an expectation that all undergraduate students would share common knowledge. Bloom recommended moving to a “great books” curriculum and Hirsch recommended a “national curriculum” (p. 75). The implication from the perspective of the “conservative agenda” was that general education imparted a common knowledge to undergraduates.

Derik Bok and Ernest Boyer represented an “establishment agenda” that supported a pragmatic approach based on strengths and weaknesses of American higher education (Eaton, pp. 70-73). Bok believed it was unrealistic to expect professors to subordinate everything to a set of shared objectives for students, but that it was equally wrong to ignore common goals and questions of realizing aims (Bok, 1986 in Eaton, 1991, p. 70). Boyer stressed viewing general education as a program with clear objectives achieved through a variety of paths rather than as a single set of courses (Eaton, 1991, p. 71). Boyer believed that common courses did not achieve coherence. He proposed integrating general education with the major field of study created coherent and meaningful undergraduate education (Eaton, 1991, p. 71).

“Third Agenda” educators believed both conservative and establishment approaches to education were “tools to perpetuate a social and economic order that is oppressive and undesirable” (Eaton, 1991, p. 79). “Third Agenda” reports also perceived that elitist ideologies rooted in Western traditions created an educational system that perpetuated an unfair and inequitable economic system (Eaton, 1991, p. 83). Their concern with social change was consistent with an effective citizens model that stresses a relationship between individuals and a multicultural society.
The three competing ideologies implied different consequences for how general education might change in the period between 1990 and 2000. There were great similarities in the literatures by Eaton and Newton. Figure 2.1 related the ideological approaches proposed by Eaton to Newton’s (2000) proposition that general education operated in one of three broad models.

**Figure 2.1: Ideologies and Models for General Education Curricula**

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<tr>
<td>Conservative Agenda</td>
<td>Great Books Model</td>
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<td>Establishment Agenda</td>
<td>Scholarly Disciplines Model</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third Agenda</td>
<td>Effective Citizens Model</td>
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The educational policies of the “conservative agenda” urged a shift to more tightly sequenced core programs emphasizing traditional western values consistent with a “great books” model. That proponents of the “establishment agenda” argued for a pragmatic approach to curricular issues, implied very little actual change in the common practice of delivering general education through disciplinary distribution models protecting both student choice and faculty independence in the pursuit of knowledge. The “third agenda” concluded general education practice would emphasize plural ways of knowing over traditional knowledge domains. Their definition of an effective citizen was one who was prepared to embrace a pluralistic society. Each was evidence of the connection between ideology, educational philosophy, and the organization and purpose of the curriculum.

Stark and Lattuca’s (1997, Chapter 5) analysis of the reform movement between 1984 and 1994 differed from that of Eaton. They fitted the recommended reforms to the elements of their academic planning model. Stark and Lattuca (1997) classified the
reform movement in two groups, critical reports and proposals for reform. Stark and Lattuca argued creating coherence for an increasingly disparate undergraduate curriculum was a central message of these groups. By curricular coherence, they meant the degree to which a particular curricula makes connections between courses in a way that “makes sense” to students.

Both Eaton (1991), and Stark and Lattuca (1997) identified tensions in the curricula similar to those mentioned by Newton (2000). Bok (1986) argued that these tensions or points of debate in the curriculum were not new; rather, they have existed for centuries. So while Eaton, Stark and Lattuca, and Newton saw curricular tensions as tied to calls for reform of the era, Bok saw such tensions as endemic. While the issues of curricular reform at the beginning and end of the century may have similar qualities, it was clear that in the latter half of the century these issues were more public.

This review of the literature concluded that general education is an important part of most undergraduate degrees, that it is contextual, that debates about general education are recursive, that tension exists between general and specialized education, and that an untested assumption of general education is its perceived role to provide meaning to undergraduate education. The following section discusses literature on the status of general education practice in the United States between 1980 and 1999.

**Recent Studies of General Education**

This research examines general education programs in four-year undergraduate programs across the nation. Previous studies of general education informed the present study. This section of the literature review examines studies of general education at
individual institutions and nationally across institutions to highlight findings and methodologies. Studies examined general education programs at individual institutions. Ballou (1996) examined how taking a multicultural course in general education affected freshman “global mindedness”. His study used a Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design (Campbell and Stanley, 1963). It found small declines in “global mindedness” in both the control and experimental groups. He found that the only variable that significantly influenced global awareness was the political orientation of the students (Ballou, 1996) “Conservative students” decreased more in global awareness than students were whose political orientation was not conservative. Ballou acknowledged his study was limited in that it examined change after only one semester and that the observation after one semester might not have observed all the effects of the treatment on the experimental group.

Njumbwa (1994) also examined the effect of adding multicultural requirements to general education; however, the purpose of the study differed from Ballou. Njumbwa’s purposes were to examine how cultural diversity became a part of the general education program at the institution and how new general education programs were developed, implemented, and institutionalized on a campus. Njumbwa’s case analysis approach used primary data gathered through interviews over a nine-month period and secondary data gathered through documentary sources. Njumbwa found that internal and external constituencies influenced curricular change and that curricular reform could occur when there was a rationale, institutional commitment, and a collective effort to change the curriculum.
Other studies at individual institutions examined the process of organizational change as it related to general education revision. Blois (1987) studied implementation of a new general education program on a specific campus. He examined “source documents” and interviewed 21 people involved in the design and implementation of a new general education program. The study used two models for curricula development: “Ralph Tyler's objectives-based method and Decker Walker's 'naturalistic model'” (Blois, 1987, p. 1). The study found that the development of the new program reflected the use of a “naturalistic model” of curricula development that was supported by faculty development efforts, that faculty participation in the development of the new program was high, and that individual course development was iterative resulting in standard courses.

Sellers (1989) examined the relationship of general education to undergraduate education at individual institutions. Sellers analyzed transcripts of students and surveyed faculty in the school of liberal arts and the school of engineering in a single university to observe differences in how general education related to the major between professional degree programs and liberal arts degree programs. The study found that students who conferred with faculty in planning their academic course of study showed better integration of general education with the major than did students who chose courses freely or who simply enrolled in prescribed courses.

Etemad (1991) analyzed student transcripts to compare general education practice across institutions. Etemad used student transcripts to construct case analyses of a university and a community college to determine differences general education purpose, structure, content, breadth, and coherence. Etemad’s transcript analysis found that
course-taking patterns of students were similar for university students and community college students. Etemad found no relationship between stated purposes of general education, program structure, or courses approved for general education. General education content on both campuses was primarily introductory and the course-taking patterns of students revealed a very limited pattern of common coursework for students in general education. The study found that general education at both institutions lacked coherence.

Studies examined general education within higher education systems. Dosumu (1998) used multiple regression analysis to study how completing a state prescribed core curriculum contributed to the success of students transferring from a community college to a state university. Dosumu based his conceptual framework on Tinto’s Model of Student Development and Bean and Metzner’s Model of Non Traditional Students. The study found that completing the core requirement contributed significantly to student success.

Studies of general education also examined general education in specific institutional contexts. Acosta (1980) studied the undergraduate catalogs of 16 private liberal arts colleges to examine how general education had changed in liberal arts colleges. The analysis was both longitudinal and cross-sectional and found that between 1953 and 1978 total hours for graduation increased, general education and major requirements remained stable, and electives increased.

Wood (1999) studied 200 catalogs through content analysis to assess the state of undergraduate general education practice in 1997 at selected liberal arts institutions. He found relationships between philosophies and resultant structures of general education as
posed by Berquist’s (1978) and that two additional categories (i.e. multiculturally-based and interdisciplinary-based) had emerged since Berquist published his work.

Other studies evaluated the state of general education nationally. Some of the studies were historical looking at broad changes in both the philosophy and practice of general education over time. Shelton (1991) examined changing emphasis in general education practice on critical thinking, reflective thinking and problem-solving throughout the history of American higher education. Higginbottom (1991) examined the history of general education at community colleges paying special attention to the civic mission of community colleges over time. Historical studies of general education follow methodologies not used in the present study; however, they were mentioned because they are important both in providing a methodology for studying general education across the American higher education landscape and because they are the basis of the current context of general education research and practice.

Periodic national studies examined the state of general education practice. Gaff (1991) surveyed chief academic officers of institutions that were actively engaged in general education reform. He supplemented the survey data with information gathered from course catalogs and committee reports, memos, etc. Gaff’s study was largely qualitative in that he collected data in order to interpret it in light of his “own knowledge and experience” (Gaff, 1991, p. 68).

Toombs, et al (1989) analyzed college catalogs to examine general education practice in the United States. The report was designed for comparison to a pair of previous studies done in 1967 and 1974 by the Carnegie Commission that were published
in a report by Blackburn (1976). The methodologies of the reports summarized by Blackburn were quantitative analyses based on content analysis of college catalogs.

The Gaff (1991) and Toombs, et al. (1989) national studies provided an important benchmark of the status of general education at the beginning of the 1990s. The present study examines how general education changed since these reports; therefore, a summary of the findings from the prior national studies of general education follows.


The Toombs, et al. study was a catalogue study of four-year colleges and universities proportionally stratified to the 1987 Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. The Toombs, et al (1989) study selected institutions offering baccalaureate study in one of seven fields of study (i.e. accounting, biology, computer science, English, mechanical engineering, physics, and political science). Their study initially selected 700 institutions from a “universe of 1380 institutions” (p. 2); however Toombs reduced the sample to 652 as 48 of the colleges initially selected “missed the mark in a variety of ways” (p. 8). Toombs, et al (199) merged catalog data with a file of “institutional characteristics drawn from published sources…” (p. 3), coded the data, and analyzed differences in general education purpose, structure, and evaluation across institutional types quantitatively and qualitatively

The selection criterion limited the findings because community colleges, liberal arts institutions, and other institutions that did not offer all of the majors were not included. The rationale for the selection was to examine general education in rapidly growing
applied fields in contrast to traditional disciplinary fields that were stable or in decline (p.3).

The primary aim of the study was to determine the structure of general education programs, representing the number of credits required for selected majors in American colleges and universities. The study analyzed differences in general education requirements by major field and institutional type. Toombs et al. used content analysis of catalog statements was to determine the nature and intent of general education programs by analyzing the headings or labels for general education components, the statements of purpose for the programs, and divisions of knowledge within the general education programs.

The Toombs, et al. study found that general education debates revolved around “a commanding educational question” (p. 1). “What essential experiences encourage the student toward becoming an educated person”(p. 1)? They also found consensus on broad aims of general education.

That common spirit and purpose was well stated by Harry J. Carman of Columbia College many years ago, “…to liberate the mind from ignorance, fear, prejudice and superstition…cultivate a broad perspective, a critical and constructive approach to life, with standards of value by which they can live nobly…a deep sense of responsibility for their fellows…integrity easily motivated to action in the cause of freedom and goodwill…ability to think, to communicate, to make intelligent and wise judgments, to evaluate moral situations and to be able to work effectively to good ends with others.” (NSSE, 1939, p. 13 as quoted in Toombs, et al., 1989, p. 1).
Toombs, et al. found that general education in the institutions studied in 1989 were a hybrid of a heritage-based philosophy of liberal undergraduate education for a democracy and a utilitarian philosophy of education (p.1). General education existed for specific purposes and was therefore distinct from a liberal arts curriculum (p. 4). Two prominent ideas provide a foundation for general education: general education sought to define “essential experiences” that form the basis for discourse and participation throughout life; and, general education had utility; that is, it exists for a specific purpose (1989, p.1).

Toombs, et al. followed Brubacher (1977), arguing philosophical levels, policy levels, or practice levels framed educational questions (1989, p. 2). At a philosophical level, general education was often discussed absent its “operational context in the curriculum and often separated from other contingencies of the academic enterprise such as faculty expertise and manpower requirements” (1989, p. 2). The study found that, “general education” had “…little conceptual unity, certainly less than the literature suggests” (p. 23). The lack of conceptual unity led the researchers to assert that general education was no longer an intellectual construct; rather, it was merely an operational segment in the curriculum.

Institutional statements revealed the functions and aims associated with the general education component were so broad that no institution could accommodate them (1989, p. 23). Nevertheless, it was at the policy level where institutions and faculties attempted to “make sense” of common meanings for all undergraduate degrees through general education (p. 2). Faculties interpreted and responded to societal influences through general education at a policy level making it an easy target for critics. In sum,
Toombs et al concluded that there was no clear rationale for general education other than a place in the curriculum to provide some foundational or preparatory courses, breadth and distributions outside the major, a small emphasis on common learning and an emphasis on skills (e.g. communication, quantitative, etc) (p.25). Only a small percentage of institutions reported integrative modes of knowing as a primary goal (p.25).

Both policy and practice relative to general education were studies by Toombs and his colleagues. At the practice level, they identified the number of credits, specified the courses required, and the experiences specified for undergraduate students (1989, p.2). Practice across institutions was similar in that the amount of credit required was consistent (p.2); however, the courses comprising general education curriculum across institutions were less similar (p. 27). This finding supported their earlier finding that general education was more a component of the undergraduate curriculum than an intellectual construct (p. 27). They concluded that general education’s role in the curriculum was more in the development of intellectual skills than as a coherent scheme for organizing knowledge (p. 26-27).

Toombs, et al (1989) found that describing how institutions charted experiences for undergraduates is difficult. They analyzed catalogues for special curricular or pedagogical features relating to purpose to describe what learning experiences helped students accomplish the goals established for their learning. The researchers noted that catalogues, at best, provide fragmentary evidence of the teaching/learning context (p.25). Analysis of the catalogues revealed an increasing number of institutions emphasized freshman studies, developed senior “capstone” experiences, and increased the priority of
proficiency tests in areas such as writing. (Pp. 25-26). Toombs, et al (1989) found that emphasis on skill components in general education curricula were increasing.

The study found that the “…most profound consequences for the curriculum, without question, come out of the massive changes in the patterns of student choice of majors” (p.8). Student choice, perhaps is the hallmark of curriculum in the period studied. This contextual issue resulted in expanding general education offerings. Although the study did not differentiate proportions of core, distributional, or free elective organizational structures, it implies that the distributional structure is well established. The literature seems to support this assumption.

Expansion of knowledge classes influenced the growth of general education offerings. Toombs argued increases in the number of majors reflected the expansion of the disciplines to a point where traditional divisions of the three main classes of knowledge: humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences were rare (p.26). Five to Seven classes were more common up to a maximum of ten classes at some institutions. The primary difference is the addition of skill components as divisions of knowledge (p. 26).

Toombs et al. found that the growth in general education course offerings caused many institutions to become concerned with curricular coherence (p. 27). Many institutions concerned with both coherence and student choice organized general education offerings in groups (p. 27). These groupings organized distributional requirements under labels or themes. Other organizational tools that encouraged students to make their educational experience more coherent were the use of “survey” experiences
and the use of shorter “search” courses followed by more focused study based on the search experience.

Toombs, et al (1989) concluded that assessment was a relatively new curricular activity. They saw the use of proficiency testing paralleled increases in coursework aimed at personal and intellectual skill development (1989, p. 26). They found that assessment is prominent at two periods in the undergraduate cycle: on admission into the institution, and on admission into a major or professional field in the upper division (p. 26). They did not find assessment of broad general education goals.

Toombs, et al (1989) concluded that general education curricula are no longer an intellectual construct; rather they are a segment of the curricula. This segment emphasized developing intellectual and personal skills over curricular coherence. Their study occurred at the beginning of the reform movement discussed earlier. Gaff (1991) also examined general education curricula; however, he examined institutions likely to be reforming general education. His study projects the direction of general education reform at the beginning of the 1990s.

The Gaff Study (1991)

Jerry Gaff surveyed chief academic officers between 1989 and 1991 to determine changes in general education. He drew his sample from those institutions working on improving their general education curriculum. Gaff’s intention was to observe change where it was occurring. Gaff surveyed over 300 institutions. While the Toombs study provides a summary of “where general education” was at the end of the 1980s, the Gaff study provides a snapshot of where institutions interested in reforming general education
“were going” at the beginning of the 1990s. Gaff selected a sample that approximated the distribution of institutions indicated by Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (1987) (Gaff, p. 69). Gaff’s sample included institutions likely to have liberal arts missions and institutions likely to have an emphasis on applied studies.

Gaff described the purpose of general education within the context of the undergraduate curriculum. In contrast to Toombs, Gaff found that the undergraduate curriculum is strongly debated inside and outside the academy and that definitions of general education are contextually bound:

The college curriculum, as Clark Kerr (1977, p. ix) reminds us, is “the statement a college makes about what, out of the totality of man’s [sic] constantly growing knowledge and experience is considered useful, appropriate, or relevant to the lives of educated men and women at a certain point of time.” Rather than being etched in stone for all time, it is rooted in the historical and cultural realities of the time (Rudolph, 1977). The proper content of the formal curriculum is always a judgment, and that means it is a political judgment in the classic sense of that term. That is to say, the answer is determined by the polarity of a college and university: primarily by the knowledge experts, the faculty (p. 12).

Gaff proposed general education context extends beyond the institution and historical and cultural realities of a specific time ground general education. In this respect, Gaff asserted colleges and universities ought to respond to social trends through curricular decisions (p. 12).

Gaff found that as the 1990s began, colleges and universities responded to a social debate on the quality of undergraduate curriculum that emphasized the state of general
education (p. 13). He did not find criticism directed at the success of colleges and universities in preparing students in their major area of study. Instead, Gaff found that critics perceived students lacked the “…knowledge, skills, and personal qualities generally accepted as marks of an educated person” (p. 13). Thus, the critical reports implicated general education as the source of slipping undergraduate education quality.

Gaff’s discussion of general education process in this report was consistent with *Integrity* (Association of American Colleges, 1985). The research findings supported a trend in general education toward the “…knowledge, skills, and personal qualities their students should acquire” (p. 61).

According to Gaff, attention to liberal arts and sciences general education increased (1991, p. 34). The emphasis on vocational education through the 1970s and early 1980s had eroded the priority placed on liberal arts and sciences. Gaff (1991) concluded a result of this erosion was that educators, concerned with the quality of undergraduate education, rediscovered liberal arts and sciences in general education in the mid 1980s (p.34). Gaff also found that professional programs including teacher education, business, communication, and medicine also supported increased emphasis on liberal arts in general education (p.35).

Gaff identified other trends in general education reform included increased emphasis on fundamental skills, higher standards and more requirements, tighter curriculum structure, emphasis on the freshman and senior years, global and cultural studies, integration of knowledge, moral reflection, active learning, extension of general education programs through all four years, and assessment (p.33-34). Gaff (1991) found that some institutions were unaffected by the reform movement and that other institutions
made piecemeal changes. While not all institutions were reforming general education, Gaff (1991) found that collective trends were transforming undergraduate curricula. Based on his observations, Gaff stated the most fundamental change was a “more purposeful curriculum designed by colleges to serve valued educational ends” (p. 63). He concluded:

> By and large, this curriculum appears to be responsive to the charges against the freewheeling curriculum where students are given little guidance about which subjects are most valuable. It requires students to study broadly across the liberal arts and sciences; it includes an emphasis on fundamental skills; it teaches some knowledge and skills across the curriculum; and it includes many special features such as advanced or interdisciplinary courses, courses requiring original sources, and special seminars for freshman and seniors (p. 75).

Gaff concluded general education was increasing in quality and coherence and that the growth in teaching specific skills across the curriculum provided evidence of these increases (p. 98). Later research supported this conclusion. Doherty, Chenevert, Miller, Roth, and Truchan (1996) found that organizing general education programs through a unifying framework of clusters and skills encouraged quality and coherence. Gaff found that a strong majority of campus leaders reported teaching specific skills across the curriculum (e.g. 93% report writing across the curriculum, 71% report critical thinking, and 50% report computer literacy) (p. 73). Gaff found that in addition to skills, other key topics including global studies (63%), pluralism (58%), ethics and values (57%), and gender issues (53%) taught across the curriculum (p. 73).
Gaff (1991) also found that emphasis on active learning, integration of knowledge, and application of knowledge was increasing (pp. 34-60). Attention to the freshman year through seminars and the senior year through capstones was growing (Gaff, 1991).

Gaff found that a result of the changes in instructional approaches was an increased emphasis on faculty development. He found that 67% of institutions surveyed had a major or modest systematic program to develop faculty while 33% had no systematic program (Gaff, 1991, p. 103). Gaff found that those institutions that had major faculty development programs were more likely to plan and achieve a major general education revision than those institutions that had no systematic faculty development program (p. 114).

Gaff concluded assessment was in a period of experimentation (p. 58). Institutions tried various approaches to assessment. An aim of these approaches was determining measurable goals and appropriate techniques to assess these goals (p. 59). His research found that some institutions were embedding assessment in courses, other institutions were using focus groups, and others were using departmental studies, standardized instruments, or student surveys (pp. 59-60). Finally, institutions used existing data to help assess the progress of students while in school as well as their success after completing their degree. (p. 60).

**Curricular Models and General Education**

The literature reviewed so far has focused on the development of general education in the American undergraduate degree, philosophies of general education, and
previous studies of general education practice. In the 1990s researchers critically
examined curricular models used to guide practice and research.

Stark and Lattuca (1997) claimed that structural representations of curricula failed
to consider how people and processes interact to promote coherence (planned by faculty)
and integration (achieved by students) in curricula. They proposed that academic
planning models should be more “dynamic” and account for how teachers, learners,
purpose, process, and content interact (p. 372). Their model emphasized two-way
communication because faculty purposes and student purposes differ and faculty need to
understand how these purposes differ in order to help students achieve integration (p.
111). Stark and Lattuca (1997) proposed that academic plans should include at least
purpose, content, sequence, learners, instructional processes, instructional resources,
evaluation, and adjustment (p. 10) and that interactions between these people and
processes should also be considered.

Howard (1991) suggested making general education more meaningful required
reconceptualizing general education curricula as a communicative act accounting for
intended messages of the planned curricula and interpretations by students, faculty, and
other internal and external constituents.

Applebee (1996) claimed that making curriculum comprehensible to multiple
audiences required a communicative model. He described curriculum as a conversation
between teachers and learners. Applebee argued that in introducing “the notion of
curriculum as a domain for conversation …domains represent “culturally significant”
traditions of knowing and doing” (1996, p. 42). He concluded that knowledge is
contextually defined by disciplines and that meaning requires socializing learners into
significant traditions of knowing and doing in disciplines (Applebee, 1996, pp. 42-43). He concluded that socialization required understanding both messages as transmitted by disciplinary experts (teachers) and messages as interpreted by disciplinary novices (learners) (pp. 42-43). Prior educational experiences influence student interpretations of curricula (Applebee, 1996, p. 43).

Ratcliff (1997b) concluded that that although individual students need to experience coherence in the curriculum, “… current curricular configurations largely do little to promote such connected learning” (p. 145). Critical reports issued in the 1980s and 1990s proposed conventional curricular conventions to promote connected learning. Most of the reports defined what that common experience should be and rarely defined how students would experience coherence (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). Ratcliff (2000) concluded that that curricular coherency requires a move beyond traditional definitions of curricula as purpose, process, organization, and evaluation because these conceptualizations failed to account for the interpretations of curricula made daily by “…students, parents, employers, various faculty and university administrators, higher education pundits and politicians” (p. 1). Like Stark and Lattuca (1997), Ratcliff concluded that understanding both how faculty planned curricula and how students understood curricula were necessary to promote quality and coherence in general education.

Chapter 5 discusses alternate conceptualizations of curricula as they relate to the findings, conclusions, and implications of the research. Chapter 5 examined how alternate views of curricula might increase coherence and meaning in general education practice and inform future general education research.
**Conceptual Framework**

This literature review finds that making general education meaningful in undergraduate curricula requires new conceptual tools (Stark and Lattuca; 1997, Ratcliff, 2000; Howard, 1991). Similar to Blois (1987), this study used contrasting models of curricular development to guide the design of the study and the analysis of its findings.

Chapter One defined general education programs in the context of the formal undergraduate curricula as an arrangement of course requirements or a structured plan for student learning contributing to the degrees of Associate of Arts, Associate of Science and related degrees in community colleges, and the Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science and related degrees in baccalaureate-degree granting institutions.

Gaff (1991) and Toombs et al. (1989) primarily influenced the methodology for the study; however, methodologies from the other studies informed the interpretation of open-ended questions. Tyler (1950), Stark and Lattuca (1997) and Ratcliff (2000) provided the theoretical basis for the conceptual framework of the study.

Most general education studies reviewed earlier in Chapter 2 examined formal elements of curricula (i.e. the number and type of courses required, the way in which the courses are arranged, the goals of the program, and how student learning is measured). Viewing general education structurally leads to structural solutions to perceived problems (Ratcliff, 2000). The convention of examining general education structurally in practice and research supported studying change in general education from a structural framework.

Two curricular models inform the present study, Stark and Lattuca (1997) and Tyler (1950). These models use the academic planning or design process to construct or revise
Tyler’s seminal work proposed four questions guided developing quality curricula.

1. What is to be accomplished? (Purpose)
2. What learning experiences will help accomplish the purposes? (Process)
3. How can these learning experiences be effectively organized? (Organization)
4. How can the effectiveness of the learning be evaluated? (Assessment)

Stark and Lattuca (1997) argued that curricula or academic plans “should be intentionally constructed, that the developers should give conscious attention to choosing among alternatives, and that they should recognize the influences that affect these choices” (p. 3). Stark and Lattuca added to conventional academic planning model an emphasis on “dynamic issues” (p. 357) finding that interactions between people and processes were necessary to design and examine curricula that were responsive to changing needs.

Emerging literature indicates that structural models of curricula fail to account for how students experience curricula (Howard, 1991; Applebee, 1996; Stark and Lattuca, 1997; Ratcliff, 2000, 2001). These studies suggest that attention to the meaning attached to general education curricula by faculty, students, parents, governing agencies, accrediting associations, and other concerned constituencies increases our understanding of the role general education plays in the undergraduate curriculum (Ratcliff, 2000; Applebee, 1996). Chapter 5 discusses how viewing general education curriculum as an academic plan for learning and relationally as communication may provide a model for improving general education practice and inform general education research.
This study departs from previous studies because it examines general education curriculum as an academic plan and as communication. Gaff (1991) did not specifically assert using both academic planning and communicative models for studying general education but his study began to lay the groundwork for studying curriculum through multiple lenses. Gaff (1991) drew from his own expertise on general education and “...visits to scores of campuses within the last two years and extensive first-hand experience with curriculum change” (p. 68) to interpret how general education was changing.

The review of selected literature concluded that two models proposed to guide general education practice and research are models of academic plans (Tyler, 1950; Stark and Lattuca, 1997) and as models of communication (Howard, 1991; Ratcliff, 2000). Chapter 2 also articulated a countervailing argument that general education was an organizational entity of the undergraduate degree that subscribes to no particular model (Conrad, 1978; Toombs et al. (1989). The conclusion of this study reexamines each of these models, in light of the findings in this study in to consider how changes in general education might be understood.

Toombs et al. (1989) and Gaff (1991) examine the structure and organization of general education programs. While these studies examined general education from a planning or design perspective, their analysis paved the way for a more interpretive analysis of change. The present study compares data gathered to the prior studies to assess the extent to with content, form, and organization has changed since 1989. It also examines the extent to which institutional leaders report involving students and others in general education reforms.
As discussed in Chapter 2, attention to communicative roles of curricula are growing in research (Howard, 1991; Applebee, 1996; Ratcliff, 2000) and practice (Kanter, Gamson, and London, 1997). Ratcliff (2000) used context to describe how and to what extent general education programs serve a communicative role as they relate to interactions between students, faculty, and other internal and external constituencies. As discussed previously, Ratcliff asserted that structural models fail to recognize students and faculty interactions through “verbal, textual, graphic, and other communication media” (Ratcliff, 2000, p. 3) because they fail to recognize how students, parents, and other constituents receive messages. Gathering data from these external sources is beyond the scope of this research. However, as is discussed in Chapter 3, the surveys elicited open-ended responses to explore how institutional leaders attempted to clarify aims, content, and processes of general education and how students, faculty, and other perspectives influenced general education program design.

**Summary**

There were four primary purposes for the literature review. First, the literature defined general education as the formalized portion of the curriculum outside the major that is common to all students. The way institutions balance general and specialized education varies but general education is part of the typical baccalaureate degree. Second, the literature review described the political, social, institutional, and historical context of general education curricula with an emphasis on how changes in the political and social contexts might have influenced general education since the last national studies of general education. Third, the literature review illustrates that the Gaff (1991)
and Toombs, et al. (1989) studies establish a benchmark of general education practice at the end of the 1980s for comparison to the current study. Fourth, the literature concluded that structural representations of curricula emphasized planned curricula but did not provide adequate attention to how students experienced curricula. This finding supports the need for curricular reformers to use models that evaluate both the curriculum planned by faculty and the curriculum as experienced by students.

Chapter 3 states the research questions, describes the design of the study and the methodology used to answer the questions posed. Chapter 4 presents the findings and Chapter 5 discusses those findings through the framework described in the present chapter.
Chapter 3
DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine how general education changed at baccalaureate granting higher education institutions from 1989 to 2000. To accomplish this purpose, this study examines the changes in general education program aims, content, structure, practice, design, delivery, and evaluation. Toombs et al. (1989) and Gaff (1991) informed the research questions.

Research Questions

In Chapters 1 and 2, I defined general education as used in this study, provided a short history of the emergence of general education as a part of the American Baccalaureate Degree, and reviewed relevant literature to establish both the rationale for the current study and to provide a conceptual framework. These chapters indicate that conditions for significant change in general education existed between 1989 and 2000. Did institutions of higher education, however, actually change their general education programs?

As reported in Chapter 2, Gaff studied general education change through a survey administered to mostly chief academic officers. Although admitting that the respondents were not fully objective and that they might lack specific knowledge, Gaff found these individuals “…the most knowledgeable about their curricula and the best qualified to report on recent changes and their effects” (Gaff, 1991, p. 68). Like Gaff (1991), this study solicits information from two groups of academic officers at Baccalaureate granting
institutions – chief academic officers (CAOs) and general education administrators (GEAs) (see Appendix B – The Chief Academic Officer Survey - CAO 2000 and Appendix C – General Education Administrator Survey -GE 2000).

Research Question 1: Do institutional leaders perceive that general education changed between 1989 and 2000, or that it is changing?

Gaff (1991) observed that curricular changes often proceed quietly with little fanfare. The first research question examines institutional leader perspectives of general education change. It assumes that institutional leaders responsible for general education are one of the first groups to perceive the extent to which general education is changing on their campus. Questions 1a, 1b, 2, and 7 on the CAO 2000 Survey and Questions 1 and 19 on GE 2000 assess institutional leaders’ perceptions about general education change on their campuses.

The perception of change, however, tells us little of what actual changes took place. Therefore, behavioral questions elicit information on how general education practice changed. Gaff (1991) and Toombs et al (1989) were the last major studies of general education. The current study uses these studies to benchmark conditions in 1989 and 1991 and to evaluate specific ways general education changed in the decade that followed.
Research Question 2: In what ways did the structure and practice of general education change between 1989 and 2000?

The GE 2000 and the CAO 2000 surveys gathered behavioral information from participants and compared this information to the findings of the Toombs et al. (1989) catalogue study and the Gaff (1991) study. Appendix D lists the questions developed for comparison to Gaff (1991) and Toombs et al. (1989).

Toombs et al. (1989) was a content analysis of college catalogs, thus no specific questions in this study exactly corresponded to the Toombs study. However, his findings informed the development of survey questions (See Appendix D). Questions developed in the present study (Appendix D) compare the amount, distribution, and proportion of general education included in the baccalaureate degree to Toombs, et al.

Several open-ended questions are included in the CAO 2000 and GEA 2000 surveys. Questions 1b, 3, 7, and 11 (Appendix B) and Questions 3, 4b, 7,14b, 23, and 26 (Appendix C) immediately follow the quantitative questions about general education programs and are intended provide additional insight into specifics of individual general education programs, and, to permit analysis of the extent to which improved communication was part of the aim of these changes.

Research Question 3: What were the apparent influences on general education practice between 1989 and 2000?

Research Question 2 asks what changed. Research Question 3 examines what forces led to that change. Several potential sources of influence identified through the
review of literature (Chapter 2) included national panels, accrediting agencies, and policy research groups. Both surveys ask academic officers to identify and comment on the specific influences on general education. The review of literature (Chapter 2), Gaff (1991) and Toombs et al. (1989) informed the survey development (See Question 8 on the CAO 2000 Survey in Appendix B, and 12 on the GE 20000 survey in Appendix C).

**Research Design**

A cross-sectional survey design (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000, p. 432) sought to answer the research questions. Like Gaff (1991), the surveys are purposeful in that they examine general education at institutions likely to place priority on their general education programs. The study sample was drawn from members of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). This national association of colleges and universities devotes a division to general education and holds an annual general education conference. Institutions active in AAC&U are likely to have a strong interest in general, liberal learning and are likely influenced by AAC&U publications and conferences on general education.

The unit of analysis is institutional. An email to member institutions of the AAC&U solicited participants. The respondents to the respective surveys were the chief academic officers and general education administrators. The surveys asked participants to identify and comment on general education practices at their institutions.

The study uses purposive samples following Gaff (1991) who was interested in designing a study that examined “…. what is resulting from curricular changes where
they are occurring” (p. 68) instead of how widely reforms are distributed. The present study departs from Gaff’s in that it was not limited only to institutions that are reforming general education curricula; rather it samples institutions that may have a greater interest in improving and monitoring general education program quality. In this regard, the present study is also concerned about what resulted from curricular changes and how general education curricular changes distribute across institutions examined.

Change at institutions where general education is a high priority holds relevance to all institutions due to patterns of innovation and diffusion across higher education institutions. Reisman (1958) proposed that changes in higher education follow an innovation diffusion pattern similar to a snake, wherein the tail, while pursuing a different direction will ultimately follow the path established by the head. Hawthorne (1997) noted the “hallmark of American higher education is the diffusion of innovation from institution to institution, from region of the country to region of the country, from institution type to institution type” (p. 49). Undergraduate curricula follow a pattern where the emphasis on general versus specialized education shifts across institutions (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). According to the Adoption / Diffusion Model of Change (Lindquist, 1978), institutions favoring general education reform will initiate changes to their programs that are later diffused to institutions where general education is less a priority.

The cross-sectional surveys of this study used both closed-ended and open-ended questions to solicit information on the status of general education at colleges and universities who were members of the AAC&U. Questions permitted comparisons to the Gaff (1991) and Toombs et al. (1989) studies.
Sources of Data

The review of selected literature (Chapter 2) found archival studies (e.g. catalogue studies, transcript analyses) and surveys used to provide data for research on general education programs. The present study chose surveys. Surveys allowed gathering information on institutional context relative to specific general education programs. Also, surveys allow administrators in charge of general education programs to describe programs at their institution in a manner not available through the analysis of archival data alone. Archival sources by definition increase the lag time between the information sought and its date of collection. Using a survey is more efficient and allows actions and attitudes of key actors and general education structures to be studied together.

The present study uses two status surveys. The first survey (CAO 2000) solicits perceptions of Chief Academic Officers about general education at their institution and a limited amount of information on the structure of the programs. The second survey (GE 2000) administered to those responsible for direct administrative oversight of general education, gathers a greater amount of information on the structures, processes, and organization of the general education programs at the institutions in addition to perceptual information.

Survey Design and Development

Status surveys are valuable when they point out the social significance of educational programs (Kerlinger and Lee, 2000, p. 612). The surveys used in this study are status representations of an important component of the American baccalaureate degree.
However, they are more than status surveys in that they also assess how general education changed since the studies by Gaff (1991) and Toombs et al. (1989) a decade earlier.

The researcher administered the surveys on the World Wide Web. The World Wide Web is a favorable medium for administering questionnaires because it makes automated analysis possible without editing. (Mann and Stewart, 2001).

A four-stage process guided the development of both surveys. First, James L. Ratcliff, author of one of the conceptual models described in the literature, and I developed the initial drafts for both surveys. Second, a series of three teleconferences involving Jerry G. Gaff, author of one of the prior national studies of general education and Ratcliff discussed and modified the initial survey drafts. These researchers reviewed the content of the survey questions relative to the prior research by Gaff and by Toombs et al. Revisions to the surveys resulted from these critiques. Third, the researcher conducted an on-line pilot of the modified surveys. Six external reviewers including a higher education faculty member, general education administrators, and a chief academic officer participated in the pilot.

Fowler (1993) suggested that one of the best ways to pre-test self-administered questionnaires is “…in person, with a group of potential respondents” (p. 102). While Fowler recommends administering pilots in person, the present research administered the pilot on line. Therefore, pilot respondents completed the surveys in the planned delivery form consistent with Fowler’s assertion that respondents “fill out the questionnaire as they would if they were part of the survey” (p. 102).
The reviewers evaluated the clarity of the questions, the structure of the questionnaires, and the time required to complete the surveys. Reviewers provided written feedback through email and oral feedback in phone conversations. In the fourth stage of survey development, Gaff and Ratcliff discussed feedback and recommended final edits. Finally, the modified surveys were posted as a web page.

The researcher submitted surveys and a draft of the informed consent in Fall 1999 to Human Subjects at the Pennsylvania State University for an expedited review. The approved informed consent form is included as Appendix A. On advisement from the Human Subjects office, language included in the consent form specified “confidentiality was only available to the extent possible from electronic media and completion of the survey was implied consent” (Appendix A). The email inviting participation in the study attached the informed consent form for participant review. Respondents had the option of printing the informed consent and mailing it to the Center for the Study of Higher Education or agreeing online to participate. Data collection began in December 1999 and continued through June 10, 2000.

The surveys sought responses about how general education is changing in institutions likely to favor innovations in general education. Following Tyler (1950) and Stark and Lattuca (1997), the surveys include questions about purpose, process, organization, and assessment. These questions are consistent with and often replicate questions from the Gaff (1991) study. In addition, the questionnaire provides comparative data to the Toombs et al. (1989) catalog study described earlier.

Following Ratcliff (2000) and Stark and Lattuca (1997) the study examined dynamic aspects of curricula. The increased attention to the factors that increase student learning
and the assessment of student learning resulted in an increased concern as to whether students are involved in guiding and evaluating curricular changes intended to improve student learning. This study explores how CAOs and GEAs perceive the communicative role of general education and how people and processes interact to create coherent and meaningful general education experiences.

**Sampling**

Two survey samples were drawn. The initial survey sample for the CAO 2000 consisted of 567 chief academic officers at baccalaureate granting institutions who were members of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. The initial AAC&U list contained some state offices and some institutions that did not offer baccalaureate degrees. The resultant sample eliminated these potential respondents. Additionally, email addresses for some of the CAOs were not available or were inaccurate. The adjusted sample size following these deletions for the CAO 2000 was 521 CAOs. The sample drawn for GE 2000 was 279 directors/coordinators of general education at baccalaureate granting higher education institutions that were members of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. Nearly forty-two percent (41.94%) of the chief academic officers (CAOs) also served as the director or coordinator of general education. The “Data Gathering Section” describes the procedure for drawing the second sample.

Given that the AAC&U, as an organization, is a proponent of general and liberal education, respondents represented colleges and universities most interested in general, liberal education. The biased samples were purposive rather than random and selected to
see how general education is changing at institutions that may place high priority on the quality of their general education program.

**Data Gathering Procedures**

This study used a two-phased data-gathering procedure. First, emails to chief academic officers at the 567 AAC&U member institutions solicited participation in the study. The cover letter (Appendix A) invited their participation, explained the purposes of the study, and asked them to answer an online questionnaire (or alternately to print and complete a paper form of the questionnaire), the CAO 2000 Survey (Appendix B). The CAO 2000 Survey asked chief academic officers to identify the administrator directly responsible for the general education program and provide their email address. A subsequent email to officers identified in the CAO 2000 Survey invited participation in the GE 2000 Survey (Appendix C).

A follow-up email request invited participation from CAOs initially asked to participate in the study, but who had not responded to the initial letter of invitation within 30 days. The process repeated for non-respondents the following month. Phone calls and emails to the researcher revealed that not all institutions were equipped to receive and respond to email surveys, and not all administrators were adept or comfortable responding to them. AAC&U President, Carol Geary Schneider, sent a letter encouraging non-responding CAOs to complete the survey and to return it by mail. Sixteen CAOs responded by mail. In all, 279 CAOs completed surveys either on-line or through the mail (response rate = 53.55%).
The GE 2000 Survey invited GE administrators (including those CAOs who also directed the general education program) to participate in the GE 2000 Survey. This resulted in a list of general education administrators. An email sent at the same time as the second mailing to CAOs who had not yet responded invited participation. Additional nominations from CAOs completing the CAO 2000 surveys augmented the list. A follow-up email at two 30-day intervals re-invited their participation.

The CAO 2000 Survey yielded 279 names of general education administrators. Among these, 117 CAOs also served as the general education administrator. The total number of respondents was 200; however, at 23 institutions both the CAO and the general education administrator (separate individuals) completed the survey. The researcher removed these 23 CAO responses to prevent institutional duplication in the data and to meet the intent to collect data from the person most directly responsible for general education. After adjusting for these duplicates, respondents to the GE 2000 Survey totaled 177.

**Analysis of Data**

Survey responses were downloaded to an Excel™ spreadsheet from the web and numeric data exported to SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Science) to facilitate analysis. Open-ended responses remained in Excel™ to facilitate open coding of responses. Institutional classification, control, and accrediting region were determined based on information derived from a downloaded version of the 2000 Carnegie Classifications (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2001) and added to the database. The Carnegie subcategories within doctoral, masters, and baccalaureate
were not used here as was the case in the prior literature reviewed. (See Appendix E for
descriptions of the institutional samples institutional type, control, and region).

Research Question 1 asks how institutional leaders about changes in general
education. To identify those institutions where the most recent change occurred since the
last studies, Question 1a (Appendix B) asked CAOs to state the year of the last revision.
The researcher recoded the data in SPSS in ten-year increments (roughly approximating
the studies discussed in the review of literature) and calculated frequencies of the recoded
data.

Question 2 and 8 (Appendix B) gathered perceptual information on how the
specifics of general education changed in the last ten years. Question 6 (Appendix C)
gathered information on the perceived relationship between goals and institutional
mission. Frequency distributions identified how general education changed as a priority
and the extent to which general education goals are related to mission. Cross-tabulation
and a Chi-Squared procedure identified potential differences by institutional
classification, control, and region.

Question 10 (Appendix B) asked CAOs to rate their general education programs
based on characteristics. Two sources informed question 10 (Appendix B). “Clear goals”,
“requirements related to goals”, “assessment of student learning for goals”, and “coherent
sequences of courses” were major structural elements of curriculum derived from Tyler
(1950) and Stark and Lattuca (1997) as discussed in the review of selected literature
(Chapter 2). Gaff (1991, pp. 237-238) informed the remaining items in Question 10
(Appendix b). Gaff (1991) asked academic leaders to report whether or not their general
education programs possessed specific characteristics. The researcher constructed
frequencies in each category and calculated a non-parametric chi-squared procedure in SPSS. This analysis evaluated the extent to which the responses deviated from an expected pattern in which the responses were distributed equally across categories of response.

Questions 4 and 5 (Appendix B) asked CAOs to identify the status of general education reform in 2000 and their plans for revision in the next academic year. The researcher calculated frequency distributions of the dichotomous variable and cross-tabulations by institutional class in SPSS as described above.

Analysis of the open-ended survey responses following the closed-ended responses followed a procedure described by Creswell (1998). Creswell defined open coding as a process where a researcher forms “initial categories of information” about a phenomenon, finds properties or subcategories, and looks for data to show the continuum of possibilities for the properties (p. 57). Following Cresswell (1998), the analysis identified common and divergent themes from survey respondents and analyzed the themes as they related to the closed-ended question they were designed to inform. A second analysis examined the responses across all open-ended questions to discover properties not specifically explored by closed-ended questions. The study coded Questions 1b, 3, 7 and 11 (Appendix B) and Question 3 (Appendix C) to inform the discussion of chief academic officers’ and general education officers’ perceptions of general education change.

Research Question 2 solicited information on changes in general education practice. Questions 10 and 14a (Appendix C) solicited responses on the amount, distribution, and proportion of credit hours devoted to general education and compared
these findings to Toombs et al. (1989) and Gaff (1991) findings. Means and standard deviations calculated in SPSS and a single factor analysis of variance procedure performed in SPSS identified potential structural differences by institutional class.

Question 13 (Appendix C) asked those administrators responsible for general education to identify specific changes in the structure of their general education programs since 1990 guided by the Gaff (1991) survey. Frequencies of responses conducted in SPSS identified the extent to which general education structure changed.

Gaff (1991) also guided Question 1 (Appendix C) to determine the stage of general education change. The survey allowed administrators of general education to select more than one response. The study identified potential patterns in general education reform across institutions through coding each response as a separate variable and performing cross-tabulations and a chi-squared statistic in SPSS.

Research Question 3 identified apparent influences on general education reform. Question 12 (Appendix C) and Question 8 (Appendix B) asked respondents to select all applicable responses from categories derived from the review of literature (Chapter 2). Question 1b (Appendix B) asked CAOs to describe primary reasons for their most recent general education revision supplementing the responses to the closed-ended question. Open-coding (Creswell, 1998) identified factors that influenced recent general education reform efforts.

Responses to open-ended questions in both surveys identified general education programs possessing attributes associated with attributes of dynamic curricula (Stark and Lattuca, 1997) and curricula as communication (Ratcliff, 2000). Chapter 5 discusses these responses as they relate to the findings. This qualitative analysis was prospective –
to project how general education programs may better meet student, faculty, and external constituent needs in the future.

This study used surveys of general education programs to describe if, how, and to what extent general education changed between 1989 and 2000. Chapter 4 answers the Research Questions using the methods and data gathering procedures described here.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

This study examined in what ways general education changed between 1989 and 2000. Chapter 4 is organized by the research questions listed in Chapter 3.

Research Question 1: Do institutional leaders perceive that general education changed between 1989 and 2000, or that it is changing?

Chief Academic Officers (CAOs) reported their perceptions of how priorities for general education changed in the last ten years (Appendix B, Question 9). One hundred forty-six CAOs (52.7%) thought faculty place a higher priority on general education in 2000 than ten years earlier and 278 CAOs (99.6%) perceived administrators place a higher priority on general education than ten years prior. Only 57 (20.6%) CAOs believed their students place a higher priority on general education than ten years ago. Chapter 5 discusses the implication that faculty and administrators value general education more than students.

Question 1a (Appendix B) asked Chief Academic Officers when their general education program was last revised (Appendix B, Question 1a). The analysis grouped data in ten-year increments. Ten-year groupings approximated the progression of national studies on general education (Dressel, 1968; Blackburn et al., 1976; Toombs et al., 1989; and Gaff, 1991).
Two hundred six (73.8%) CAOs reported that their current general education programs were last revised in the 1990s. Of these 206 CAOs, 167 (81.01%) reported their programs were last reformed between 1994 and 2000. Thus, the majority of chief academic officers reported that their general education programs had changed during the 1990s, most within the last five years as reported in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Year General Education Was Last Revised**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year That General Education Was Last Reformed</th>
<th>Number Of Institutions</th>
<th>% Of Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before 1979</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-1989</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>16.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-Present</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>73.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 illustrates general education change by Carnegie institutional type (Carnegie Foundation, 2000). Forty-three of 64 CAOs at Research Universities (67.2%); 78 of 95 CAOs at Masters Institutions (82.1%); and 85 of 109 CAOs at Baccalaureate Institutions (77.3%) date the last revision of their general education programs between 1990 and 2000. Masters Institutions are more likely to have revised heir programs between 1990 and 2000 than either Baccalaureate (82.1% vs. 77.3%) or Research and Doctoral Institutions (82.1% vs. 67.2%).
Table 4.2: Year General Education Was Last Revised By Institutional Classification: CAO 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Class</th>
<th>General Education Last Revised</th>
<th>Before 1979</th>
<th>1980-1989</th>
<th>1990-Present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Doctoral</td>
<td>6.3% (n=4)</td>
<td>26.6% (n=17)</td>
<td>67.2% (n=43)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>2.1% (n=2)</td>
<td>15.8% (n=15)</td>
<td>82.1% (n=78)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>10% (n=10)</td>
<td>12.7% (n=14)</td>
<td>77.3% (n=85)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$X^2 = 10.176; \text{df} = 4; P = .038$

Question 4 (Appendix B) asked CAOs if they were formally reviewing their current general education program. One hundred sixty-two CAOs (58.1%) reported that formal reviews of general education plans are underway. Formal review of general education did not vary significantly by institutional type as illustrated by Table 4.3.

Table 4.3: Summary of Institutional Review of Gen Ed by Institutional Class: CAO 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Type</th>
<th>Currently Reviewing General Education Program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Universities</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters Institutions</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General education administrators (GEAs) reported on the status of revisions to their current general education programs (Appendix C, Question 1). Only 34 GEAs (19.2%) reported revisions were not underway at the time of the study, indicating the majority of GEAs (143, 80.1%) were then revising their general education programs. Fifty-five (31.1%) GEAs reported they were reviewing their programs at the time of the
study, 58 (32.8%) reported they were conducting assessment of student outcomes in
general education, 56 (31.6%) reported discussions of general education and 71 (40.1%) reported implementing changes that year.

Question 2 on the GE 2000 Survey (Appendix C) asked GEAs to report on
planned revisions next year (2001). Seventy-two (40.7%) GEAs reported plans to revise
their general education programs the following year. A cross-tabulation revealed the
relationship between answers to Questions 1 and 2 on this survey (Appendix C); it
indicated the relationship between planning and implementing general education change.
Twenty-seven GEAs (15.7%) were not currently revising their programs but planned to
revise them 2001. Only 6 (3.5%) GEAs reported that their campuses were neither
revising their programs this year nor planned to revise them next year. Over 96% of all
GEAs were either revising their program or were planning to revise their programs the
following year. Seventy-three GEAs (42.4% of total, 52.5% of GEAs reporting revision
of programs in 2000) reported revisions underway would continue to the next year (Table
4.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Planning Revision Next Year</th>
<th>Not Planning Revision Next Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presently Revising Program</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(42.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presently Not Revising Program</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Planned Revisions to General Education

The CAO 2000 Survey showed that 73.8% of chief academic officers believed
general education changed on their campus in the last decade. The GEA responses to
Questions 1 and 2 (Appendix C) provided evidence as to the stage of change in which each institution was engaged. There were no significant differences by institutional type in responses to Questions 1 and 2 in the GE 2000 Survey indicating that the pace of general education change was similar in all institutional types.

The findings (Question 1a, Appendix B) revealed that the majority of institutions dated current general education programs in the 1990s. Also, a majority of institutions planned to review these programs in 2000 or 2001 (Table 4.6). CAO narrative responses (Appendix B, Question 1b) indicated that they saw general education programs to be ever-changing and that change was largely incremental. One CAO noted that the curriculum “…is dynamic” and requires “…constant revision and updating”. Another CAO noted changing general education was a “…long process” and stated the goal for general education reform at this institution was to create “…a more integrated and responsive general education curriculum’ that was “more manageable and assessable”. The continuous process of general education reform was noted by another CAO who observed “The last full revision followed an extensive review of undergraduate education. It has changed in small ways several times since and is under ongoing review”.

In 1991, Gaff found that “periodic attempts to breath new life into the ideal of education by buttressing its practice” (pp. 149-150) to be the historical pattern for general education. The current pattern reported here differs in that academic leaders see their institutions making reforms and following these reforms with formal review leading to new changes in general education. The evidence that a large number of institutions changed general education, especially between 1994 and 2000 (n=167, 59.86%) is
consistent with the attention given general education in the late 1980s and 1990s reported in Chapter 2.

**Research Question 2: In what ways did the structure and practice of General Education change between 1989 and 2000?**

Research Question 2 asked, “In what ways did general education practice change between 1989 and 2000?” Gaff (1991) identified structural characteristics of general education. The present study used Gaff (1991) as a guide but differed in that it asked CAOs to rate the extent to which the characteristics were part of their program on a five-point scale ranging from “not at all” to “very much”. Using this rating scheme, CAOs responded to the questions regarding the extent to which their program possessed the following characteristics:

- Clear goals,
- Requirements directly linked to goals,
- Assessments of student learning for goals,
- Coherent sequences of courses,
- Advanced courses,
- Common learning experiences for students,
- Experiential learning experiences,
- Service learning experiences,
- Freshman seminars,
- Remedial and developmental courses,
- Honors courses,
- Interdisciplinary courses,
- Independent study,
- Learning contracts;
- Internships;
- Paired or linked courses, and
- Senior thesis or paper”.

One hundred (36.4%) CAOs reported their programs possessed clear goals “quite a lot” and 99 (36.0%) reported their programs had clear goals “very much”. Ninety-
seven (35.3%) CAOs and 76 (27.6%) CAOs stated requirements were linked to goals “quite a lot” or “very much” respectively. The findings revealed CAOs were less likely to claim their programs possessed coherent sequences of courses or assessment of student learning relative to goals. Only 37 (13.5%) CAOs felt their programs possessed coherent sequences of courses “very much” and 67 (24.4%) felt coherent sequences of courses were present in their plans “quite a lot”. Similarly, fifty-three (19.5%) CAOs reported their program included assessment of student learning for goals “quite a lot” and only 33 (12.1%) stated their programs assessed student learning “very much”. Means, standard deviations, skewness, and mode were calculated. Skewness calculations determined if the distribution approximated normality. Skewness values greater than one indicate distributions differ significantly from normal distributions (Glass and Hopkins, 1984). The skewness values for the structural characteristics of general education programs were all less than one. Therefore, the study analyzed and compared means of responses to evaluate the extent to which CAOs perceived their programs possessed certain structural elements (Table 4.5).

**Table 4.5: Structural Elements of General Education Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structural Element</th>
<th>Mean/ (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Goals</td>
<td>3.95/ (1.03)</td>
<td>-.794</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements Linked to Goals</td>
<td>3.72/ (1.09)</td>
<td>-.594</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent Sequences of Courses</td>
<td>3.04/ (1.24)</td>
<td>-.099</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Student Learning</td>
<td>2.92/ (1.20)</td>
<td>.150</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus, Chief Academic Officers are more likely to report that their programs have clearly stated goals and have linked specific requirements to goals than to possess
coherent sequences of courses or to assess student learning relative to general education goals. These general education characteristics are major structural elements of curriculum and reflect established priorities in changing general education curricula.

Chief academic officers reported the extent to which curricular innovations were included in their most recent general education program (Question 10, Appendix B). Table 4.6 presents the findings ordered by mean.

**Table 4.6: Extent to Which Program Possesses Curricular Innovations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Curricular Innovation</th>
<th>Mean/ (Standard Deviation)</th>
<th>Skewness</th>
<th>Mode</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Courses</td>
<td>3.51 (1.20)</td>
<td>-.428</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman Seminars</td>
<td>3.37 (1.66)</td>
<td>-.388</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common Learning</td>
<td>3.32 (1.24)</td>
<td>-.297</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Courses</td>
<td>3.13 (1.50)</td>
<td>-.166</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors Courses</td>
<td>2.99 (1.46)</td>
<td>-.176</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential Learning</td>
<td>2.74 (1.27)</td>
<td>.122</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paired or Linked Courses</td>
<td>2.64 (1.33)</td>
<td>.328</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Thesis</td>
<td>2.42 (1.51)</td>
<td>.504</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service Learning</td>
<td>2.40 (1.27)</td>
<td>.533</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships</td>
<td>2.14 (1.3)</td>
<td>.704</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study</td>
<td>2.09 (1.25)</td>
<td>.879</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial or Developmental</td>
<td>1.99 (1.30)</td>
<td>1.027*</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * Violates Assumption of Normal Curve (sk>1)

These responses indicate that general education programs are more likely to possess interdisciplinary courses, freshman seminars, common learning experiences, advanced courses, and honors courses more than experiential learning, paired of linked courses, senior thesis, service learning experiences, internships, independent study, or remedial or developmental courses. The curricular innovations included in general education programs were consistent with Gaff (1991) and indicated the innovations he
reported as trends at the time of his study persisted as trends at the time of the present study.

The study examined differences by institutional classification using a Single Factor Analysis of Variance in SPSS as described in the methodology (Chapter 3). The extent to which curricular innovations were included in general education differed significantly in two areas – common learning experiences and honors courses. Masters and Baccalaureate institutions were slightly more likely to provide common learning experiences for students than Research/Doctoral institutions (F=5.332, p=.005) while Research/Doctoral institutions were more likely to provide honors courses than Masters or Baccalaureate institutions (F=18.738, p<.001).

These CAOs’ perceptions of the pattern of general education reform differed from the historical pattern described by Gaff (1991). How did this changing reform pattern affect general education practice? This pattern was examined to determine what areas of general education were reviewed by asking general education administrators to identify formal review activities (Appendix C, Question 18). Table 4.7 summarizes the responses of general education administrators.
Table 4.7: General Education Areas Reviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Target of Periodic General Education Review</th>
<th>Number of Institutions Reviewing</th>
<th>% of Institutions Reporting Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Goals</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>60.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diverse Perspectives</td>
<td>89</td>
<td>50.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synthesizing Learning Experiences</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>49.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making Transition to School</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills in Field</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>40.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overcoming Deficiencies</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with Others</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>32.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrating In-Class and Out-of-Class Learning</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student’s Shaping Learning</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>23.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutions reviewed clarity of goals more than other structural elements of general education programs consistent with the priorities of CAOs and GEAs on clear goals reported. Other characteristics of the curriculum regularly reviewed were: diversity, synthesis, transition to school, and skill development. These findings affirmed curricular trends reported previously by Gaff (1991) and Toombs et al. (1989). A chi-squared statistic calculated from a cross-tabulation of general education area and institutional type indicated no significant differences by institutional type.

A cross tabulation was also constructed to compare the extent to which structural elements prioritized by GEAs (Appendix C, Question 15) were also subject to formal review. A Chi-Square statistic produced in SPSS found that prioritizing clear goals and formally reviewing clear goals are significantly related ($p < .001$, df = 4). Also, GEAs who gave priority to coherent sequences of courses were likely to review the extent to which such sequences helped achieve goals ($p < .001$, df = 4). Although coherence was a
principal CAO aim for reform of general education, a majority of institutions did not review their programs specifically for coherence.

Seventy-six (42.9%) CAOs reported reviewing courses designed to assist students’ transition to college. Eighty-five (58%) GEAs reported reviewing freshman seminars in their general education programs.

Institutions reviewed diversity courses and issues in general education. Eighty-nine (50.28%) GEAs reported that general education programs were reviewed to assess the extent to which diversity issues were addressed and 76 (42.9%) reported including diversity courses in their general education programs.

The CAO and GEA survey results present a consistent picture of general education. They indicate that the practices that are priorities for chief academic officers and the practices of general education administrators are similar, and that GEAs review most structural elements prioritized by CAOs. It is not clear how discussions emanating from these reviews translated into improved general education programs.

To better understand the relationship between campus discussions of general education programs and actual changes in those programs, the study compared responses to two questions. Table 4.8 provides a cross tabulation of those campuses engaged in discussion of general education reform with reported revisions underway (See Question 1 on the GEA Survey, Appendix C).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.8: Stages of General Education Revision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Currently Revising Program</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(n=44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Not Currently Revising Program</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Seventy-eight (52%) of GEAs reported that general education was being revised and was no longer being discussed as a change. Forty-four (29.3%) GEAs reported discussions of general education were continuing as their programs were being revised. Finally 28 GEAs (18.7%) reported neither that neither discussion nor revision of the general education program was occurring.

A second cross-tabulation examined if assessment accompanied implementing new general education programs. Table 4.9 provides a cross tabulation of those campuses implementing new general education programs while assessing student learning relative to general education goals (see Question 1 on the GE 2000 Survey, Appendix C).

Table 4.9: Assessment and Implementation of General Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Implementing Change</th>
<th>Not Implementing Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessing Student Outcomes</td>
<td>15.3% (n=23)</td>
<td>18.0% (n=27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not Assessing Student Outcomes</td>
<td>25.3% (n=38)</td>
<td>41.3% (n=62)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The present study found that only 23 (15.3%) GEAs reported assessing newly implemented changes in general education. A slightly larger number of campuses 27 (18.0%) were assessing student outcomes while not implementing new changes to their general education program. How did assessment of student learning relate to general education change?

Gaff (1991) reported that assessment of general education was “increasingly common, both to identify problems that call for change and to determine the extent to which a new curriculum is effective” (p. 58). Toombs et al. (1989) catalog study did not
find comprehensive assessments of general education programs; they noted that where assessment were required, they were used to determine specific skills through proficiency testing and to place students in an initial set of courses. Toombs et al (1989) reported that comprehensive assessment programs were not apparent at the time, noting assessments primary role was to place students in an initial set of courses upon entry to college and to determine specific skills through proficiency testing.

Gaff surveyed administrators while Toombs et al examined catalogs as documents. At the time of their respective studies, assessment was clearly being discussed but was either regarded as inappropriate for published catalogs or was too new to be included in them. This research examined catalogs of selected institutions and found that the majority of institutions did not specify how general education was assessed in their catalogs. Also, the majority of web pages describing general education did not describe general education assessment.

Only 86 CAOs (31.6%) and 55 GEAs (32.4%) reported assessing student learning in their general education programs. Thus, less than one-third of institutions evaluated whether students were accomplishing the goals of their general education programs.

While comprehensive assessment of student learning within general education programs was present in less than one-third of institutions, there were assessments of specific general education content or skill areas (Table 4.10).
### Table 4.10: Assessment at the Course Level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area</th>
<th>Number and Percent Reporting Stated Goal in Each Area</th>
<th>Number and Percent Assessing Goal Attainment</th>
<th>Percent Assessing goals of Those Stating Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td>150 (87.7%)</td>
<td>86 (48.6%)</td>
<td>57.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td>145 (81.9%)</td>
<td>82 (46.3%)</td>
<td>56.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math/Quantitative</td>
<td>140 (79.1%)</td>
<td>86 (48.6%)</td>
<td>61.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>131 (74.0%)</td>
<td>72 (40.6%)</td>
<td>54.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>124 (70.0%)</td>
<td>68 (38.4%)</td>
<td>54.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td>105 (59.3%)</td>
<td>65 (36.7%)</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>101 (57.1%)</td>
<td>66 (37.3%)</td>
<td>65.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy, Ethics</td>
<td>99 (55.9%)</td>
<td>58 (32.8%)</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
<td>83 (46.9%)</td>
<td>53 (29.9%)</td>
<td>63.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td>71 (40.0%)</td>
<td>40 (22.6%)</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td>68 (38.4%)</td>
<td>39 (22.0%)</td>
<td>57.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>66 (37.3%)</td>
<td>39 (22.0%)</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Area</th>
<th>Number and Percent Reporting Stated Goal in Each Area</th>
<th>Number and Percent Assessing Goal Attainment</th>
<th>Percent Assessing goals of Those Stating Goals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading/Writing</td>
<td>156 (88.1%)</td>
<td>121 (68.3%)</td>
<td>77.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td>119 (67.2%)</td>
<td>77 (43.5%)</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Diversity</td>
<td>113 (63.8%)</td>
<td>50 (28.2%)</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking/Listening</td>
<td>98 (55.4%)</td>
<td>67 (37.9%)</td>
<td>68.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computing</td>
<td>92 (51.9%)</td>
<td>59 (33.3%)</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Studies</td>
<td>92 (51.9%)</td>
<td>43 (24.3%)</td>
<td>46.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>70 (39.5%)</td>
<td>37 (20.9%)</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Long Learning</td>
<td>57 (32.2%)</td>
<td>23 (13.0%)</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Work</td>
<td>36 (20.3%)</td>
<td>14 (7.9%)</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td>19 (10.7%)</td>
<td>12 (6.8%)</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessment in content and cognitive areas was more likely than broad programmatic assessment. With the exception of “collaborative work”, “life long learning”, “global studies”, and “cultural diversity” over half of institutions reporting goals assessed students on those goals.

Assessing student learning in general education increased since the Toombs et al. (1989) study. Toombs and his colleagues found that assessment primarily influenced
student placement. The present study found that assessing student outcomes is common in curricular areas that had established curricular goals. The present study found that institutions are likely to favor assessing goals in content and cognitive areas over broad programmatic assessment. Chapter 5 discusses implications of this finding for practice.

The study asked GEAs to identify how their institutions described general education to students (Question 16, Appendix C). Analysis of this data identified the types and number of media higher education institutions used to explicitly communicate aims, organization, processes, and benefits of general education.

One hundred seventy-one (96.6%) GEAs reported general education communicated through the catalog, 171 (96.6%) through the Internet, 52 (29.4%) by view books, 142 (80.2%) through student peer advising, 152 (85.9%) by faculty advising, 80 (45.2%) through course syllabi, 80 (45.2%) in class by faculty, and 68 (38.4%) through special general education publications. The study found that most institutions used a variety of communication media. In 172 (97.8%) of institutions, GEAs reported more than one media used to communicate general education to students. The mean number of communications used was 5.175 (SD = 1.67) with 118 (66.7%) of institutions reporting between 4 and 6 communication media used. Although variety of media is one aspect of the communicative dimensions of curricula, it shows that institutions devoted much time and resources to communicating general education to students. Prior studies did not discuss the extent to which institutions attempted to help students understand general education.

This study found that structural elements of general education curriculum general education curriculum changed between 1989 and 2000. Toombs, et al. (1989, p. 14)
compared general education distributions by percentage of institutions specifying general education distributional areas to prior studies. Gaff (1991, pp 71-72) described a typical general education program based on his observations. Have those changes resulted in different course credit distributions (Toombs et al., 1989) and followed the trend to increased prescription of general education (Gaff, 1991)?

GEAs described the number of hours required for BA degrees, BS degrees, and the hours required for graduation. Table 4.11 presents the mean hours required for BA, BS, and general education as reported by GEAs responding to Question 10 (Appendix C).

**Table 4.11: Credit Hours Required for BA, BS, and General Education**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean Hours Required (BA Degree)</th>
<th>General Education as % of BA</th>
<th>Mean Hours Required (BS Degree)</th>
<th>General Education as % of BS</th>
<th>Mean Hours General Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>125.46</td>
<td>37.59%</td>
<td>125.83</td>
<td>37.48%</td>
<td>47.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Std. Deviation</td>
<td>17.43</td>
<td>19.38</td>
<td>13.02</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

General education continued to comprise a significant portion of baccalaureate degrees in 2000. Compared with Toombs et al (1989), the proportion of general education credits to total credits remained fairly constant over the decade. In 1989, general education was 30% to 39% of total degree requirements depending on institutional type (Toombs et al., 1989). During the decade under study, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching changed the way it classified institutions, making comparisons by institutional type between this study and the Toombs et al. report not possible. Gaff (1991, p. 71) reported an average 49.2 credit hours allotted to general education and 39.5% of the total hours in a baccalaureate degree were general education courses. In this study, general education comprised 37.59% of Bachelor of Arts degrees and 37.48% and the mean
number of hours for general education was 47.16. Thus, the number of general education credit hours and proportion of general education in the baccalaureate degree showed little change since 1989.

The courses students are required to take as part of the general education requirements for the baccalaureate degree changed from 1989 to 2000. Table 4.12 compares the Toombs et al (1989) findings with those on the GE 2000 Survey.

**Table 4.12: Comparison of General Education Distribution**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gen Ed Requirements</th>
<th>% Institutions Specifying</th>
<th>Modal No. of Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>63.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>96.7</td>
<td>91.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>86.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math-Quantitative</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>92.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>96.1</td>
<td>93.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Science</td>
<td>93.7</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Language</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>59.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>67.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>47.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Work</td>
<td></td>
<td>48.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td>66.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>58.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td>88.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td>59.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Science</td>
<td></td>
<td>83.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td>73.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy</td>
<td></td>
<td>*Bi-Modal Distribution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From 1989 to 2000, general education course requirements changed in several respects. The number of curricular areas required in general education expanded from 1989 to 2000. But, as discussed earlier, the proportion of general education to the baccalaureate degree remained fairly constant. In 2000, a greater proportion of institutions had specific requirements in all subject areas examined, except the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Although 3 to 5 percent fewer institutions had specific natural science, social, science and humanities requirements, this finding may be an artifact of the survey question. The GE 2000 survey itemized several content areas subsumed in the humanities, natural science, and social science categories of Toombs et al. (1989). Among those general education areas common to both studies, the largest increases were in interdisciplinary studies, math and quantitative skills, values, and computer literacy. Also in 2000, institutions prioritized students’ understanding of other cultures (66.2% of institutions) and the complexities of global issues (58.3% of institutions). These increases continued trends noted by Toombs et al. (1989, p. 34) and Gaff (1991, p. 34). Institutions reported growing degrees of specificity in general education subject requirements, significantly more than those reported by Toombs et al., yet general education comprised about the same proportion of the undergraduate degree credits, indicating that general education programs had become more prescriptive.

How do institutions organize their general education programs? Are most general education programs still distributional or is the trend toward a core curriculum? Respondents to the GE 2000 Survey found completing the tables on specific content and cognitive areas was difficult (Question 14a, Appendix C) and revealed shifts in general education practice at many institutions away from traditional content oriented structures
to more thematically driven general education programs. One GEA noted that the categories listed on GE 2000 did not “represent separate phenomena” in their general education program and stated skill areas listed in the question were “embedded in the Integrative Studies courses” within the general education program. Another GEA noted: “Our lower-division learning communities create the possibility of interdisciplinary teaching and learning and require thematically linked content courses in either the sciences or the humanities or the social sciences. While we have no requirements specific to global studies, several of the learning communities have global themes. Both collaborative work and leadership are general education program outcomes and the learning communities are meant to incorporate activities and learning adapted to those outcomes”.

Another GEA described general education areas as “interdisciplinary areas of understanding that are not tied to disciplines or departments”. Yet another GEA described how general education were embedded in the program rather than individual courses. “Reading, writing, speaking, information literacy, critical thinking, and creative thinking are required in every general education course. Finally, a GEA observed, “Our choices do not mirror your categories. They include cultures and civilization and studies in aesthetic experience, for example”.

These comments were consistent with the prior finding (Table 4.12) of increases in institutions with interdisciplinary requirements (from 19.4% in 1989 to 63.9% in 2000). Institutional leaders perceived themes increased coherence and meaning across the curriculum. Also, institutional leaders believed curricular themes connected study
between disciplines and permitted inclusion of innovations such as learning communities, service learning, reflective essays and capstones.

CAOs and GEAs claimed that themes were used to make the learning experience coherent, to help students bring meaning to their general education program, and to provide students the opportunity to make connections between their education and social or societal issues. The data of this study did not indicate any clear trend toward or away from prescribed core curricula or distributional elective curricula in general education. The data did show increased prescription of courses in a greater number of curricular areas or topics and the use of curricular themes to convey the organization of general education curricula. Chapter 5 discusses the implications of these findings.

Regarding Research Questions 1 and 2, the findings showed that general education changed between 1989 and 2001. The change was largely incremental and built on trends reported by Toombs et al. (1989) and Gaff (1991). Reforms stressed coherence and proposed two primary approaches to make curricula more coherent. One was to increase prescription in general education programs. A second approach was to use themes in cores and distributional plans. Finally, academic leaders saw general education programs as dynamic, needing to respond to changing needs of students and society. The following section discusses influences leading to change in general education.

**Research Question 3: What were the apparent influences on General Education Reform?**

Research Question 3 asked, “What were the apparent influences on general education practice between 1989 and 2000?” What motivated institutions to reform their
general education programs? What characteristics of their programs were targets of reform? GEAs reported on external influences in Question 12 (Appendix C) and on internal influences through Question 1b (Appendix B). The external influences listed in the survey were not intended to be comprehensive as there are many direct and indirect influences on the curriculum (Garcia and Ratcliff, 1997). Rather, the influences identified in Question 12 were those derived from prior studies and therefore were amiable to comparison.

One hundred seventy-five CAOs (62.7%) reported at least one external influence on general education. The study found that sources of influence varied across institutions and that no one single influence affected the majority of institutions. There were no differences by institutional classification; however, external influence differed for public and private institutions. Eighty-four public institutions (83.2%) reported at least one external source of influence while 87 private institutions (49.2%) reported at least one external source of influence. External factors were more influential at public institutions than private institutions.

The most common external influence reported across institutions was that of the regional accrediting associations. One hundred six CAOs (38.0%) and 81 (45.8%) GEAs saw their latest reforms influenced by regional accrediting associations. Cross tabulations did not reveal significant differences between institutional types.

Other external forces were also not highly rated by GEAs (Question 12, Appendix C). Only 64 (22.9%) CAOs and 45 (25.4%) GEAs cited specialized accrediting groups as influential. Fifty-nine CAOs (21.2%) and 43 GEAs (24.3%) reported that articulation agreements influenced general education reform. Thirty-six CAOs (12.9%) and 22
GEAs (12.4%) claimed higher education systems or coordinating boards influential. Nineteen CAOs (15.8%) and 22 GEAs (12.4%) GEAs claimed state legislatures influenced changes in their general education programs while 44 CAOs (15.8%) and 22 (12.4%) claimed state-coordinating boards influenced general education reform.

While state agencies and accrediting associations have sought to be influential over general education, the findings of this survey did not indicate widespread impact among baccalaureate-degree granting institutions in 2000 by any one group with the exception of a few accrediting regions. Regional accrediting agencies were a growing source of influence on general education programs in some regions. As illustrated in Table 4.13, there were significant differences in reported influence of accrediting agencies by region (Table 4.13).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total Number of Institutions in Region</th>
<th>General Education influenced by accrediting agency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle States</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F = 4.068, p = .01

Institutions in the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) reported the highest affect by accrediting association (57.1%) and is the only region where more than half of all CAOs reported regional accrediting associations affected general education programs. The Western Association of Schools and Colleges was nearly 50%, as was the
New England Association; however, CAOs in all other regions did not perceive accrediting associations very influential over general education.

Analysis of open-ended responses (Question 1b, Appendix B) failed to clearly identify specific sources of influence on general education reform. Instead, CAOs elected to describe why general education changed. Sources of influence were mentioned in relationship to reasons for change including increased emphasis on outcomes or competencies, the need to add or strengthen specific components of general education, meeting the requirements of articulation agreements, and easing transfer between institutions absent formal articulation agreements.

These descriptions of why general education changed represent internalized sources of influence. Question 1b (Appendix B) provided multiple reasons CAOs perceived led to general education change including:

1. The general education program had little coherence.
2. Changes in student or faculty needs required general education reform.
3. The program had become outdated.

Two hundred six CAOs reported general education reform between 1990 and 2000. Analysis of open-ended responses to Question 1b (Appendix B) for those CAOs revising their programs between 1990 and 2000 revealed 111 (53.88%) CAOs discussed coherence or fragmentation, 98 (47.57%) reported their plans failed to meet student or faculty needs, and 78 (37.86%) reported their programs out of date.

Chief academic officers thought general education programs had a “shelf life”. One CAO noted, “The old plan had been in effect for ten years and was due for review” Another CAO associated the life of a general education program with changes in society.
“Our previous curriculum was over 15 years old and did not reflect realities of today’s life.” This CAO believed that changes in “realities of life” changed the nature of what general education should do. Still another CAO saw “out of date” to be related to changes in the students enrolled, “It had been over ten years since general education was last reviewed and the statistical (and actual) quality of the entering students had significantly changed”.

Most CAOs expressed needs to make general education curricula more coherent. They proposed a variety of paths to coherence, including tying general education to the major, to mission or goals, and a reduction in general education course offerings. Most CAOs mentioned multiple causes for a lack of coherency. For example, one CAO who saw general education coherence lacking due to inadequate integration with the major, stated the “…program was modified to integrate it more effectively with programs in the Schools and Departments”.

Other CAOs saw coherence in general education being achieved through reexamination of its relation to institutional mission, “Currently we are developing an entirely new general education program because: we need to tie general education to mission; the current curriculum is out-of-date and does not address coherency or needs, and it does not have adequate assessment.”

Another CAO thought faculty “wishes” for coherence were related to how general education reflects institutional mission and an educational philosophy. “The revision was based upon faculty wishes to provide a coherent and distinctive general education program for students reflective of both the institutional mission and liberal arts tradition”.

Many CAOs mentioned lack of coherence directly (Question 1b, Appendix B) while others indirectly discussed coherence in comments regarding the reduction of distribution requirements, movement to core curricula, and the tightening of existing core curricula. Gaff (1991) reported that curricular leaders assumed that by reducing the options students have in general education coherence would be achieved. Findings from the present study agreed with Gaff. CAOs associated coherence with reduced student options.

One CAO promoted changing from distributional requirements to core requirements to increase general education integration. This CAO stated the reason for the most recent revision to general education at his institution was to “…integrate the teaching of competencies across the curriculum”. Another CAO noted the tendency of general education programs to expand the number and variety of courses over time, created fragmentation. “The general education package of courses had grown uncontrollably over the years. There was a lack of coherency of offerings, with awful disconnection of learning and skill-building experiences”.

Yet, another CAO, in describing why general education was reformed, remarked on how the expanding nature of general education and the practice of piecemeal revision efforts discouraged coherence in their general education program. “The previous program had become very unwieldy. It was a distributional model with nearly 350 course options. The aims and goals of the program were vague. It had been revised piecemeal over the years”.

Ratcliff (1997b, 2000) questioned whether reducing distribution requirements increased coherence, and Ratcliff (1997b, 2000) and Stark and Lattuca (1997) concluded that moving to a core curriculum alone did not result in increased coherence. The
findings of the present study agreed with Ratcliff (1997b, 2000) and Stark and Lattuca (1997). The present findings revealed that CAOs continue to assume reducing the number of general education offerings resulted in increased coherence; however, the extent to which they perceived their programs achieved coherence remained fairly low; only 104 CAOs (37.9%) thought their general education program contained coherent sequences of courses “quite a lot” to “very much”. Chapter 5 discusses the gap between general education practice and research as it relates to coherence.

CAOs also reported that they perceived general education programs were reformed to meet either faculty or student needs. Sometimes CAOs cited faculty needs as primary reasons for changing general education.

“There was a sense of weariness among faculty who had carried the main teaching load in certain parts of the program. In particular there was a sense that it would be refreshing and, possibly, result in more effective pedagogy if we abandoned several of the common syllabus courses that had characterized our approach for many years in favor of common themes around which individual faculty would structure their own syllabi”.

CAOs also reported changing general education programs in response to student needs. CAOs thought changing student characteristics at entry required general education programs changes. In addition, general education changes responded to special needs of first year students. General education programs changed to meet institutional goals defining student outcomes and competencies needed at graduation. Finally, CAOs perceived general education reforms to result from needs to assess student learning. The narrative comments of CAOs that follow illustrate each of these points.
Several CAOs suggested concerns about student learning and lack of full-time faculty involvement in general education prompted reform.

“The need to redesign our required freshmen seminar was prompted by concerns about lack of involvement by full-time faculty across the disciplines and student concerns about variability in quality and confusion about intended purposes of the course”.

Other CAOs wanted general education made relevant to student needs after graduation through specification of outcomes and competencies.

“It was time to revise our plan, given the significant changes at the institution and the various post-baccalaureate cultures into which our graduates were moving. We wanted to address development of competencies such as multi-cultural global issues, technology, and strengthen critical thinking, problem solving, etc”.

Another CAO provided this explanation. “Our general education program was revised to update it according to student needs and to add an integrative capstone course.”

Changes in the types of students enrolling at a specific institution were a prominent reason for change.

“Student retention was decreasing. The preparation level of entering students is continuing to be lower than in the previous decade and their attitudes towards education and difficult work is also lower. As a commuter campus, we thought that a greater sense of community was needed”.

Institutional leaders saw general education change between 1989 and 2000. They believed faculty and administrator priorities for general education increased. Over 90% of institutions reported general education revision between 1990 and 2000. Primary aims
of the reforms included increasing coherence, meeting student and faculty needs, and updating programs.

The critical reports discussed in the review of the literature (Chapter 2) sought to influence undergraduate and general education practice. However, the present study did not find them directly influencing general education practice, as CAOs’ open responses did not list them as influential in general education. Toombs, et al. thought that the national reports of the 1980s critical of undergraduate education affected changes in content and structure of general education. Gaff concluded that these reports were less important to curricular content and were more important as facilitators of review, analysis and change. Gaff argued that the public debate on general education kept education as a high public priority, helped generate support for nurturing generally educated students, and provided “impetus and direction for a large amount of curriculum change on college campuses” (1991, p. 30). The present research supported Gaff and contradicted Toombs. If the reports influenced change in general education, the influence was not apparent in the data.

The study found that selected external influences on general education were present; however, no single external source influenced the majority of institutions. Some regional accrediting agencies influenced general education more than others did. External sources influenced public institutions more than private institutions. Perceived needs inside colleges and universities more likely influenced general education change. These changes often paralleled external calls for reform. Chapter 5 discusses implications of these findings.
Summary

This study found that general education administrators and chief academic officers reported that general education changed at their institution from 1989 to 2000. The changes were largely incremental and intended to make general education programs more coherent, to better meet needs of students and faculty, and to update their programs based on societal and institutional changes. They also saw general education programs becoming more dynamic, requiring regular review and updating.

The surveys also identified structural changes in general education, including increased prescription of courses, increased attention to issues of diversity and global issues, increased emphasis on interdisciplinary study, and increased use of thematic curricular designs in general education. External influences on general education were indirect and none of the selected types of influence was predominant across institutions. External constituents influenced public more than private institutions. Regional accrediting agencies, most notably SACS, influenced the majority of institutions in their region regardless of classification or control. Chapter 5 draws conclusions, specifies implications and makes recommendations for future research.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This national study found that general education changed in significant ways from 1989 to 2000. These changes occurred mostly as reforms to existing programs rather than the creation of entirely new general education programs. While general education programs comprised about the same proportion of credits of the bachelors degree in 2000 as in 1989, the requirements became more prescriptive, relying on themes and sequences of interdisciplinary coursework to achieve their ends. The reforms aimed to achieve greater coherence and to improve conveyance of meaning, structure, and purpose to students. Chapter 5 draws conclusions about changes in general education practice, discusses implications for theory and practice, and discusses needs for future research.

Conclusions about changes in General Education

Between 1989 and 2000

Research Question 1 asked if institutional leaders responsible for general education perceived changes in general education between 1989 and 2000. CAOs on a majority of campuses reported recent revisions to their general education programs. Two hundred six of the 279 (73.8%) CAOs report their general education programs changed between 1990 and 2000. Cross-tabulations in Chapter 4 show that the majority of institutions were both currently revising their program and planning a revision in the coming two years. This finding suggests not only that CAOs perceived past and continuing change, but also that general education programs are more dynamic than in
the past, departing the historical pattern where interest and innovation in general education occurred in waves as reported by Gaff (1991). CAOs in this study perceived relatively continuous or regular patterns of review, reform and revision of general education.

Research Question 2 asked in what ways general education changed between 1989 and 2000. General education leaders report that general education increased in priority for faculty and administrators but not for students. CAOs believe that their recent reforms resulted in clearly stated goals and courses linked to those goals, more than coherent sequences of courses or broad assessment of general education goals. CAOs think that interdisciplinary studies, freshman seminars, common learning experiences, advanced courses, and honors courses are more common to their programs than experiential learning, paired or linked courses, senior thesis or projects, service learning, internships, independent study, and remedial or developmental courses. Prescription of courses in general education requirements increased. This is a major change since Toombs, et al. (1989) who found that student choice was a primary trait of general education curricula. However, this finding affirms the trend noted by Gaff in 1991 toward increasing prescription. Since Gaff’s study was of institutions likely to be innovating in general education and Toombs et al. was not, the finding is consistent with the assertion found in the literature (Chapter 2) that higher education programs follow an innovation-adoption-diffusion pattern (Reisman, 1958; Hawthorn, 1997; Lindquist, 1978).

Higher education institutions are more likely to assess content and cognitive areas than to assess broad general education goals. Open-ended responses of CAOs indicate
that they perceive assessment as the most common challenge for general education
programs at individual colleges and universities. Assessment of content and cognitive
elements of general education increased when goals were stated.

Research Question 3 asked what were the apparent influences on general
education between 1989 and 2000. One hundred seventy five (62.7%) CAOs reported at
least one external influence on general education. While there are no significant
differences in reported influence by institutional classification, there are differences in
influence reported by institutional control. External stakeholders are more likely to
influence public institutions than private. Eighty-three percent of public higher education
institutions report external influence compared to 51% of private institutions. While this
study did not purport to study all external factors potentially influencing the curriculum,
it did examine those identified in prior research on general education as influential.
These categories of external influence may need to be expanded in future research, and
investigators may need to examine indirect as well as direct influences. Conversely, one
may draw the conclusion that change in general education is mostly internally rather than
externally driven.

Of the external influences, regional accrediting associations influenced general
education programs more than other external groups. While only 38% of CAOs report
regional accrediting associations influence general education programs, CAOs in the
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), the Western Association of
Schools and Colleges (WASC) and the New England Association of Schools and
Colleges (NEASC) were more likely to report their associations influenced general
education requirements. A little less than half of public institutions report that state-
governing authorities influenced general education. The findings were inconclusive as to the extent state government influence changed since 1989 since comparative data were not available from prior research.

In the 1980s and 1990s, numerous reports criticized undergraduate and general education (see Chapter 2). Toombs et al. (1989) found these reports had a direct influence on general education. Gaff (1991) found these reports indirectly influenced general education. This study found external influence was indirect, consistent with Gaff (1991). One CAO commented on potential influences on general education reform stating that “influence is the primary word here, we are not driven by external influences”. Stark and Lattuca (1997, p. 372) noted that institutions often respond to external influences only after internalizing such influences. The reasons for change cited by CAOs are consistent with needs identified by the critical reports. In this respect, these comments represent internalized influences on general education reform. Analysis of comments by these academic leaders suggest that needs to increase coherence, to meet student and faculty needs, and to update programs influence general education reform.

CAOs report that faculty and administrators at higher education institutions placed a higher priority on general education than ten years prior while students placed less priority on general education. One CAO described the greatest challenge facing general education as “getting career oriented students to value general education”. Generating student interest in general education is challenging. One CAO stated a challenge for his institution is “to teach the students appreciation and need for general education”. Another CAO felt challenged to “find innovative ways to attract student interest in general education”. From the viewpoint of the administrators surveyed, most
recent general education reforms do not appear to make general education more meaningful for students despite efforts to clarify goals, link courses to goals, and create coherent sequences of courses.

This research indicates that a principal aim of reforms in general education was to increase coherence in general education programs. General education leaders’ perceptions and reported changes in the structure of general education support this finding. In the present study, like Gaff’s CAOs see curricular change as a means to improve coherence and combat its antithesis – fragmentation in general education.

Although CAOs and GEAs may not perceive that general education changed as a direct result of external influences, the changes made to general education were similar to those proposed in national reports and scholars writing during the period (Association of American Colleges, 1985; Gaff, 1991; Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence, 1984; Weingartner, 1993; Zemsky, 1989; Ratcliff, 2000). These reports held that undergraduate education was in disarray and reforming general education would enhance coherence and meaning in baccalaureate education (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). In the 1980s, as was the case at the beginning of the century, a primary aim of reform was to increase coherence and the attendant assumption was that coherent general education programs resulted in more meaningful baccalaureate education. However, how or if general education provided meaning for baccalaureate education was not critically examined.

Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 established historical precedence for colleges and universities responding to criticisms of baccalaureate education through general education. The formalization of general education in the undergraduate curriculum in the
early 20th century was a reaction to the belief that undergraduate education was increasingly fragmented (Cohen, 1998). Critics of higher education between 1870 and 1944 claimed the free elective system and fragmentation of knowledge resulted in vague expectations for what learning was expected from a bachelor’s degree holder (Cohen, 1998, p. 142). Thus, there was precedent for associating student choice through electives with curricular fragmentation and with loss of meaning and coherence in undergraduate education.

The reform movement in the late 1980s and early 1990s renewed the debate on coherence and meaning in undergraduate education. Stark and Lattuca found that in different ways reports issued on the status of undergraduate education in the 1980s and 1990s “...criticized the colleges for excessive specialization in current academic programs; more specifically, they chided educators for an inability to agree – and insist on – what students should know to be granted a college degree” (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 82).

As at the beginning of the 20th century, critics of undergraduate education in the late 1980s and early 1990s perceived that disciplinary specialization and a lack of common learning experiences resulted in a fragmented curriculum that failed to define a baccalaureate degree. Critics assumed that increasing coherence in general education brought meaning and understanding to baccalaureate education (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 82). Consistent with the critical reports, colleges and universities responded to criticisms of undergraduate education through general education.

Between 1989 and 2000, institutions sought to make general education more coherent and meaningful through increasing the prescription of general education courses
and reduced student choice. According to CAOs, reducing student choice, tightening
distribution options, establishing or refining core requirements, and integrating courses
across disciplines increased or improved curricular coherence. One CAO said, “We
revised our general education program to provide some framework for coherence to a
curriculum based until then on student choice.” Another CAO noted, “Currently over
270 courses each semester count toward general education, which demonstrates the lack
of coherence in the program”. Gaff (1991) also found that academic leaders perceived a
connection between increasing prescription of courses and improved curricular
coherence. While CAOs perceive this connection, the findings of this study that less than
a third of CAOs perceived their general education program was coherent suggests that
increasing prescription of courses may not result in more coherent curricula.

In addition to increased prescription, CAOs and GEAs reported other structural
reforms to general education included interdisciplinary sequences of courses and thematic
organizations of general education programs. The present study found increases in
interdisciplinary general education structures. Nearly 64 percent of institutions reported
interdisciplinary courses in general education requirements. This is in sharp contrast to
Toombs et al. (1989) who found that approximately 19 percent of general education
programs required interdisciplinary courses. Prior research found that interdisciplinary
courses promoted coherence through integrating knowledge across disciplines (Gaff,
1991, p. 52). The findings of the present study were inconclusive as to whether
interdisciplinary sequences of courses contributed to more coherent general education
programs.
This study suggests an emergent trend in general education practice is using themes to organize general education curricula. One CAO described the most innovative feature of general education at his institution.

“It is now a four-year program beginning with a year-long course developed by multi-disciplinary teams of faculty. The design is intended to build community among urban, often commuter students. The middle of the curriculum includes thematically linked clusters of courses drawn from multiple departments. The senior capstone consists of interdisciplinary teams of students implementing responses to real community issues. Student mentors are part of the instructional teams at the Freshman and Sophomore levels. The curriculum has clearly identified learning goals”.

CAO comments, reported in Chapter 4, suggest some academic leaders perceive using themes makes general education more meaningful to students. For example, one CAO who stated the primary reason for reform was to increase curricular coherence reported her institution was attempting to, “…discover how to infuse the general education experience with themes reflecting our institutional commitments to the Appalachian region”. Discovering the extent to which themes achieve this aim is beyond the scope of the present study. However, this chapter suggests that future research to examine how alternate curricular models that propose coherence is both an attribute of the curricula faculty plan and the meaning students attach to curricula may contribute to increasing curricular coherence.

Another aim of the current reforms is meeting student and faculty needs. CAOs and GEAs perceive that these changing student and faculty needs require that general
education programs be more dynamic than in the past. Institutions are more likely to review general education and follow those reviews with revisions. While meeting student needs was an aim of the current reforms, it was not clear from the findings how student needs were determined.

In summary, this research concluded that general education changed between 1989 and 2000, and that the aims of general education reform were coherence, meeting student and faculty needs, and updating general education programs to make them more relevant. Moreover, although coherence was a primary aim, leaders at most institutions still do not perceive general education programs are very coherent. Strategies for creating more meaningful and coherent general education curricula include reducing distribution requirements, increasing prescription of courses, interdisciplinary linking of courses, and thematic groupings of courses. Apparently, these structural changes have not yet achieved their aim of a more coherent curriculum. Achieving coherent curricula may require more than academic planning and structure reorganization. Alternative models that consider both how faculty plan and students understand general education may be needed. Stark and Lattuca (1997) suggest that curricular coherence improves when models including interactions between students, faculty, and content reform efforts guided reform efforts. Similarly, Ratcliff (2000) concluded that achieving curricular coherence requires considering both the curricula as planned by faculty and the curricula as understood by students. This research supports the claims of Stark and Lattuca (1997) and Ratcliff (2000, 2001). Alternate models are needed that emphasize relational aspects of the curriculum and that consider how students interpret curricula.
**Implications for Theory and Practice**

While the current study was limited to the reported practices and perspectives of CAOs and GEAs, it did not find that interactions between learners, teachers, and content or student interpretations of general education were considered in general education reform at most institutions. Four CAOs stated that they considered student interpretations of general education. One CAO stated that a challenge for his institution was providing students and advisors resources for "constructing" general education programs. Two other CAOs reported that their institutions used student surveys to assess institutional goals for general education.

CAOs and GEAs, however, did find that their programs needed to be more dynamic and responsive to student needs. CAOs and GEAs report that student needs influence reform, that curricula are student centered, and that changes in student characteristics at their institutions are reason for general education reform. The present study generally did not identify how student needs are determined at most institutions. Only seven institutions surveyed reported how student needs are determined. As reported earlier, two institutions assess student perceptions of general education through a student survey. Three additional CAOs stated that student needs are determined in part through discussions with industry and governmental leaders.

CAOs and GEAs considered student needs in multiple ways. One CAO observed that a challenge for general education was “to continue to adjust to the educational needs of our student population. General education should be an alive program that evolves with the students, and not a program written in stone which is not responsive to student needs” (Question 11, Appendix B). Another CAO stated, “the challenges we face are
the need for constant renovation of the core focused on what students need to learn rather than on what faculty want to teach” (Question 11, Appendix B). This CAO also stated “the various post-graduation cultures into which our graduates were moving required responsive general education programs”. Other CAOs and GEAs felt needs “to make general education more relevant for students” and found “convincing career-oriented students of the importance of liberal general education” was challenging.

Despite institutional attempts to make general education more relevant, student centered, adaptive to student needs, and coherent, CAOs reported that students placed a lower priority on general education than ten years before the study. CAO and GEA comments do not provide a clear reason for the decreasing priority students place on general education. However, some CAO and GEA comments provide potential areas to examine. One CAO commented, “students perceived the major and increasingly a second major contributed to career success while general education did not”. Other CAOs stated the cost of education was prohibitive causing students and parents to question why courses unrelated to their career were required. A closely related group of responses found students did not perceive general education as relevant. Finally, two CAOs found it challenging to make general education comprehensible to students and parents.

While CAOs discussed making general education more student centered, the changes made to general education appear to reflect faculty and administrator interpretations of what students need. Increasingly, general education was prescribed for students and general education courses were aligned with broad goals determined by faculty and administrators; however, student achievement of broad general education goals are not often assessed. Further, it is ironic that the very same administrators who
sought to make the curriculum more student centered did so by decreasing substantially student choice and election in general education. Stark and Lattuca (1997) concluded that many faculty plan curricula with student needs in mind without realizing that student purposes differ from faculty purposes for general education. They suggested that academic plans include procedures for evaluating students and external constituents purposes for undergraduate education (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 179). An implication of this finding is that students, parents, and other stakeholders of higher education may need to be involved in establishing the aims of general education programs. A second implication is institutions need to assess student outcomes for general education relative to broad general education goals. Asked to identify the greatest challenge to general education, CAOs identified the need to assess student outcomes more often than any other challenge. One hundred nineteen CAOs (42.65%) listed assessment as their greatest challenge for general education over the next several years.

Recent general education reforms are most likely to result in clearly stated goals and to link courses to goals. The current general education reform movement “…seems to focus more on purpose than on learners and to provide little opportunity for academic plans to reflect on learners’ needs or desires” (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 185). One hundred eighty one CAOs (64.84%) discussed recent changes to general education as they related to institutional mission, definitions of what a baccalaureate degree should mean, attributes of what students needed to be able to know or do, or educational philosophy. The present research suggested that a priority for general education leaders was communicating this purpose to students. One CAO commented, “We need to teach the students appreciation and need for general education courses and develop more
applicable sequence of courses identifiable by all”. Another CAO noted the challenge of “ensuring that students understand and will be able to meet the requirements.” CAOs also noted the challenge of helping faculty understand and value general education. One CAO noted the greatest challenge facing general education was “ensuring faculty see general education as value added and not simply a service course”. The need to "make general education comprehensible to parents and students" was an aim of general education reform stated by one CAO.

The desire to make general education more comprehensible is common across institutions. General education meaning and coherence are associated with tying general education goals to institutional mission, aligning general education with major programs, developing interdisciplinary links between courses, and organizing curricular sequences thematically (Chapter 4). As reported earlier, however, this increased interest in making the program more understandable to students may have relied on faculty and administrator perceptions of purposes for general education, and those may have differed from students’ purposes for general education (or lack there of). The resultant curriculum might have been coherent while lacking meaning for students.

CAOs assessment of the priority students place on general education is consistent with the assertion that general education curricula may lack meaning for students. These academic leaders reported that the priority students placed on general education decreased while the priority faculty and administrators increased over the last ten years. Discovering the reasons why students prioritize general education less than in the past is beyond the scope of this study. However, we can conclude that institutional attempts to clarify general education goals, to increase curricular coherence and meaning, and to
meet student needs did not result in increasing the perceived value of general education for students.

Some literature (Chapter 2) questions the ability of structural solutions to promote meaning and coherence in curricula (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, Ratcliff, 2000). Stark and Lattuca (1997) noted that structural curricular models emphasized goals, processes, and organization and failed to recognize interactions between teachers and learners (p. 378). The present study supports their conclusion and suggests curricular planning needs to consider interactions between students, teachers, and materials.

Stark and Lattuca (1997) suggested that coherence was an attribute of program quality commonly cited in practice since the Yale Report of 1828 (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 352) and asserted coherent curricula respond to changing institutional contexts. Their review of literature describing research of academic planning by faculty suggested that present structural models of curricula neglected issues involving “...the interactions of people and the processes that concern people” (Stark and Lattuca, p. 378). They claimed that, although their model might fit structural classifications that assume “...teaching and learning activities can be identified, designed, and directed” (p. 377), it was more dynamic than previous models because of its explicit considerations of interactions between people and processes (p. 378).

Some CAOs also believe that curricula are dynamic structures that respond to student need. Sixty-three (22.6%) CAOs described plans as dynamic, flexible, or responsive to changing student characteristics. For example, one leader stated, “general education curricula are dynamic and respond to changing student needs”. However, few academic leaders discussed interactions between learners, teachers, and materials in
planning curriculum in the survey.

Ratcliff (2000) asserted that structural representations of curricula presented difficulties in creating coherence while maintaining the dynamics and responsiveness of the curriculum. He concluded that a structural approach may actually place these two ideals for the curriculum at odds because structural solutions to perceived problems may result in static solutions that may not be responsive to changes in needs (Ratcliff, 2000). An implication of this study is that more interactive curricular models may improve general education reform efforts. These models can improve general education practice by narrowing the gap between the curricula faculty plan and the curricula interpreted by students, parents, employers, and other undergraduate education stakeholders.

Ratcliff (2000) and Stark and Lattuca (1997) believed that understanding changes in undergraduate education required alternate conceptualizations of curricula. The present research supports their position. Although general education leaders sought to make general education more coherent through changing the structure of curricula, the majority did not perceive their general education programs are coherent.

Stark and Lattuca (1997) proposed that structural changes to curricula might improve both coherence and integration. Following Posner (1974), they suggested a more “parsimonious representation of curriculum structure” might be created by classifying “curriculum content (units or courses)” on two dimensions – commonality and temporality (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 137). They proposed that by structuring core curricula based on pairing topics as curricular units (commonality) and organizing those units in relationship to time (temporality) general education curricula may provide a context for interactions between instructors, learners, and content (Stark and Lattuca, p.
Stark and Lattuca (1997) also found that faculty needed to be aware that students may interpret curricula in unexpected ways and that two-way communication was needed to clarify intended outcomes of academic plans.

Ratcliff (2000, 2001) noted that structural representations of curriculum failed to create coherent curriculum because they neglected daily interpretations of curriculum made by internal and external constituents of colleges and universities. He found that multiple perspectives of a single curricula exist and that viewing curricula as communication provided a model that considered both the overt curriculum planned by faculty and the hidden curriculum experienced by students (Ratcliff, 2001).

The findings of the present study that institutional leaders sought increased coherence through structural changes and that these same leaders perceived their general education programs had yet to achieve coherence are consistent with Stark and Lattuca’s claim that increasing prescription does not necessarily promote coherence and Ratcliff’s (2000, 2001) claim that structural solutions do not achieve coherent curricula. The implication of the present research is that achieving the aims of general education may be improved through reform efforts guided by alternate models that account for interactions between students, faculty, and content and that consider student interpretations of curricula. What might these models look like?

Recently, several researchers proposed that relational models emphasizing the communicative roles of curricula might improve curriculum research and practice. Relational models for constructing and analyzing curricula emphasize the relationships between teachers and learners or among groups of learners (Ratcliff, 2000). Communicative curricular models propose curricula are interactions where learning

Howard (1991) suggested that existing general education philosophies are incomplete and concluded general education curricula serve a communicative role. He proposed a critical theory based on his interpretation of Habermas’s (1984) *Theory of Communicative Action*. Howard reported that Habermas claimed free and open communication is a prerequisite for all human interest. This implied that speech is an act that goes beyond linguistic competence to communicative competence (Howard, 1991). Drawing from Habermas, Howard concluded that reconceptualizing general education based on communicative processes rather than based on broad educational philosophies improves understanding of general education. He concluded that, “By applying Habermas’ theory of communicative competence to the communicative processes that articulate general education, it is possible to gain a philosophical basis beyond the immediately ideological from which such programs can be judged” (Howard, 1991, p. 107).

Although not discussing general education specifically, Applebee (1996) suggested that current curricular models neglect the communicative value of curricula. He describes curriculum as a conversation between teachers and learners. Applebee concluded that in introducing “the notion of curriculum as a domain for conversation …domains would represent “culturally significant” traditions of knowing and doing” (1996, p. 42). Applebee suggested that curriculum was knowledge in context. Languages, traditions, and conventions of disciplines typically define this context (Applebee, 1996). Applebee’s argument extended the traditions of knowing and doing to the socialization of students.
Conventional curricular models emphasize how general education is structured (Stark and Lattuca, 1997; Ratcliff, 2000). These structural representations, however, do not account for interactions between students, faculty, and content (Stark and Lattuca, 1997) or daily interpretations of curricula (Ratcliff, 2000). The present research suggests that current reform efforts may have emphasized structural changes that did not account for these interactions. The research found little evidence that students and other stakeholders were part of the reform process. Asked about their general education review process, only four CAOs mentioned students were included in the process.

Stark and Lattuca propose that their academic planning model addresses the shortcomings of prior structural representations of curricula. Stark and Lattuca (1997) suggest that quality curricula should consider at least purpose, content, sequence, learners, instructional resources, evaluation, and adjustment. They propose their model “…provides an organizing framework for considering curricular issues, serves as a guide for curriculum research, and helps faculty and administrators design academic plans more efficiently” (p. 374) and that their model is useful for lesson level analysis, course level analysis, program analysis, and institutional analysis (p. 15). They concluded considering “dynamic issues” in academic planning “…especially those that involve the interactions of people and the processes that concern people” improved the quality of curricula (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 378).

Stark and Lattuca described coherence and integration as related constructs of curricula (p. 111), and proposed that coherence is defined by faculty, and that integration is achieved by students. They concluded both coherence and integration “must be considered in developing effective academic plans” (p. 111). They define integration as a
“student’s assimilation and reconstruction of the relations of concepts within an academic field and their connections with life and work” and claim that “student’s educational goals, as well as their cognitive and affective characteristics, will influence the degree to which they integrate the content of a plan” (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 202). General education planning at a majority of institutions considered student needs. However, there is little evidence to support that students were involved in determining their needs. If coherence is planned by faculty and integration is received by students, then curricular planning requires increased attention to student goals for undergraduate education.

Ratcliff (1997b) concluded that although individual students needed to experience coherence in the curriculum, “… current curricular configurations largely do little to promote such connected learning” (p. 145). Critical reports issued in the 1980s and 1990s emphasized how an invigorated commitment to common learning through general education was needed to bring coherence to the undergraduate degree. Most of the reports defined what that common experience should be and rarely defined how students would experience coherence. Ratcliff (2000) suggested curricular coherency requires a move beyond traditional definitions of curricula as purpose, process, organization, and evaluation because these conceptualizations failed to account for the interpretations of curricula made daily by “…students, parents, employers, various faculty and university administrators, higher education pundits and politicians” (p. 1).

Following Grice (1975), Ratcliff (2000) claimed that quality curricular were both structural and relational. Structural models define the literal meaning of general education (e.g. what are students required to take). Relational models define the contextual meaning of general education (e.g. how do general education components
work together to promote a definition of what an undergraduate degree mean). Both
models provide insight on curricular quality. This definition suggested that students
construct meaning for undergraduate degrees through their general education experiences
within an institutional context. Part of this context is the academic plan for what general
education provides students in relationship to their baccalaureate degree.

The ideas of general education as communication and general education as an
academic plan may appear to conflict; however, the idea that curricula are more than
simply a way of structuring knowledge has precedence. Rudolph (1977) described
curricula as both structure and substance:

…In describing its structure, we compute courses, semesters, lectures, departments,
majors, and so forth. In exploring the substance of the curriculum, the stuff of which
the learning and teaching is made, we are in the presence of quality, whether good or
bad…Judging quality requires some notion of what the curriculum is expected to do
(p. 2).

Rudolph also stated that a curriculum is “…a locus and transmitter of values” (Rudolph,
1977, p.3). Rudolph acknowledged the inherent communicative role of curriculum. His
definition assumed one-way communication stressing the transmission of information.
The emphasis on curricula as transmitted messages fails to recognize the interpretive role
of students, parents, and other constituents.

Prior conceptualizations assumed curricula to be transmitters of information,
knowledge, and values. Tyler’s (1950) seminal work proposed an academic planning
model for curricula arguing quality curricula were organized around purposes, processes,
organization, and evaluation. Goals communicated purpose and evaluation communicated
back to the curriculum designer the effect of the program on the learner. Stark and Lattuca (1997, p. 209-211) observed that two-way communication was essential to assist students in integrating new knowledge, that meaningful curricula required instructors and students knowing each others goals and plans for learning.

Ratcliff’s (2000) communicative model of curricula proposed that curricular coherence results from the extent to which students find the curricula relevant, the level of information provided appropriate, the goals and processes explicit and overt, and that students perceived knowledge transmitted to them and constructed by them was accurate. The present research suggests that while goals were clearly stated, the purposes of general education plan might not have been explicit. While several CAOs mentioned making general education more relevant, it was unclear how relevance was determined. An implication is that students might need to be more involved in constructing general education programs that meet their needs.

The findings of this study suggest that creating meaningful general education programs require alternative models of curricula. It found that the majority of reform activities consisted of changes to structural aspects of general education programs. Furthermore, institutions did not often assess broad aims for general education nor did they involve students in informing these aims. Reforms appeared to define quality and coherence without involving students in general education review. These findings support the need to guide general education reform using models that explicitly consider both curricula as planned by faculty and curricula as received by students. Two models, Stark and Lattuca (1997) and Ratcliff (2000), emphasize different aspects of meaning and coherence in curricula and hold promise in guiding future general education reform. The
Stark and Lattuca (1997) model urges faculty to consider student interpretations while planning curricula while the Ratcliff (2000) model proposes a framework to understand how students and other stakeholders might interpret curricula. The following section discusses how research and practice in general education might benefit from designing and examining general education through one or both models.

**Needs for Future Research**

The present chapter concludes that new curricular models might improve general education quality and coherence. It described two models. Stark and Lattuca (1997) proposed a dynamic academic planning model that considered interactions between people and processes. Ratcliff (2000) proposed that a model of curricula as communication provided a theoretical base for understanding curricula. It considered both the overt (planned by faculty) and hidden (experienced by students) curricula and contributed to more meaningful and coherent curricula.

Conventional curricular models served general education well (Ratcliff, 2001). They helped define some general education structures based on the organization of knowledge and helped faculty focus on creating programs that align assessable goals with processes and organizational structures. The consistent calls for reform, activity of state legislatures, accrediting association activity, and discourse in the general education community, however, indicated that general education did not provide meaningful and coherent experiences for students, and that external and internal audiences did not perceive general education was meaningful. Despite the ability of these models to produce internal cohesion based on the structure of a program, internal cohesion alone
was not helpful in understanding of the role of general education for students, parents, external constituents, and even faculty (Chapters 4, 5). Faculty and administrators value general education more than ten years ago while students’ value general education less, suggesting that the structural changes made to general education over the last decade did not achieve primary aims to make curricula more coherent or meet student needs. Future research needs to examine why the priority students attach to general education is decreasing.

Since the early 1900s, general education served a historical role to make undergraduate education more meaningful. However, empirical studies have not determined if or how general education contributes to meaningful undergraduate education. Future research needs to address how general education promotes coherence and meaning in the undergraduate degree. Such research should include faculty, students, alumni, employers, and other internal and external constituents. Questions should explore societal needs for baccalaureate degree holders, identify if there are common competencies expected of all graduates regardless of discipline, and gather student perceptions of what they need from their college experience beyond major and professional or disciplinary training.

Critical reports of undergraduate education in the 1980s and 1990s found that undergraduate education was fragmented. These reports recommended that general education should provide common learning for all students. Institutions responded with structural solutions. The solutions proposed by most of the reports were largely structural, based on an assumption that increased prescription of courses would decrease fragmentation and increased coherence. Guided by these reports, accrediting agencies
and state governing agencies supported increasing general education coherence through increasing prescription and decreasing student choice (Stark and Lattuca, 1997). The present study found that establishing a core or reducing options in a distribution plan did not improve coherence. Prior research findings were similar (Stark and Lattuca, 1997; Ratcliff, 1996).

Prior research (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, Ratcliff, 1997b) concluded that understanding how students experience the curricula is necessary to improve curricular quality, coherence, and integration. Stark and Lattuca claimed that faculty planned coherence and students achieved integration. Ratcliff asserted that the quality of curriculum should be based on the curriculum planned by faculty and the curriculum experienced by students. Previous general education studies examined goals, content, organization, and evaluation. These studies neglected interactions between students, faculty, external constituents, content, and processes. A direction for future research should be to examine these interactions. Combining Stark and Lattuca’s (1997) academic planning model and Ratcliff’s (2000) curriculum as communication model may provide a framework for examining the curricula planned by faculty and the curricula experienced by students.

Structural curricular models like Stark and Lattuca or Tyler assume that coherence is an attribute of the plan or design. Prior to Stark and Lattuca, these models did not propose to critically examine how students interpret designs and construct meaning. Research needs to examine how students integrate planned general education curricula to make undergraduate education more meaningful. The present study supports the need to answer three critical questions proposed by Stark and Lattuca (1997, p. 197)
for directing curriculum development. The present research modified these questions to guide research and practice in general education in the future:

1. How will students be motivated to achieve general education objectives?
2. How will the selection and arrangement of general education content influence and be influenced by learners’ information-processing mechanisms?
3. What learning skills do students need to develop to help them integrate knowledge from multiple disciplines to promote meaningful general education experiences?

These questions begin to examine the relationship of academic plans to student outcomes in general education. They also provide a basis to intentionally plan for student interpretations of curricula through curricular designing processes.

Ratcliff’s (2000) communicative curricular model provides three questions to examine student, faculty, and external constituent perceptions of how general education is achieving its purpose relative to undergraduate and societal needs.

1. What aims for general education do students, parents, employers, faculty, and administrators find relevant?
2. Do general education programs allow sufficient time for students to explore in depth knowledge needed to achieve the aims for their general education experience?
3. Are the goals and processes for general education explicitly communicated to students so that they can match their personal educational goals with institutional goals?

Ratcliff’s model provides a guide for assessing and evaluating curricular quality from the
perspective of students. In so doing, it also addresses a major challenge perceived by many CAOs to find ways to assess broad aims of general education.

Together these two research streams -- curriculum as academic plan and curriculum as communication -- may help identify what general education means in a specific institutional context, and may help individual students select institutions that better fit their goals for undergraduate education. These two research streams also would help identify differences in the planned and experienced curricula and improve both coherence and integration. Finally, using the models together appears to hold promise for bridging the gap between the overt and hidden curricula (discussed in Chapter 2).

Trends in the research on general education (Chapter 2) suggest that institutions attempt to explicitly communicate benefits of general education in context. An emergent area of general education practice appears to be emphasizing the development of outcomes and competencies. Fifty-nine CAOs (21.14%) stated that their most recent reforms emphasized clarifying student competencies and outcomes. Thematic general education emerged that emphasized meaning over structure and emphasized students integrating knowledge in context. Future research needs to examine how themes, outcomes, and competencies help students achieve academic integration. Such research should also examine differences in student learning based on differences in students at entry into an undergraduate program.

A challenge for general education reform in the coming years is to respond to the growing diversity of students. Quality general education programs intricately link student ability, interest and prior learning suggesting there is no one-best curriculum (Ratcliff and Associates, 1995; Ratcliff, 1996). Quality, therefore, is the extent to which
general education programs “fit” students and promote progress, persistence, performance and degree attainment. At the same time, knowledge structures communicate external standards of what constitutes quality general education programs. Further research needs to examine if certain types of general education experiences benefit certain groups of students.

New conceptualizations of curricula need to define quality against external standards and as processes of student development. This research proposed two models that might help define quality reflecting both the planned curriculum and the experienced curriculum. Missing from this analysis, however, is how students perceive that general education contributes to their learning. This suggests that future general education research is needed to better understand how students “make sense” of general education programs.

CAOs and GEAs report active involvement by accrediting agencies by state governing agencies promoted external standards for general education. CAOs at public institutions discussed state influence as a challenge. Their comments revealed that in several states, governmental agencies focused on standardizing general education. Two reasons for standardization of general education emerged from the comments of CAOs. First, standardization of general education by legislatures facilitated transfer between institutions with minimal loss of credits to students. Secondly, standardization of general education curriculum by states involved a determination of outcomes, competencies, or subject areas for general education. Standardization, therefore, was both an articulation and accountability issue.

Why have several states chosen to define the standards for general education?
One CAO perceived that “the public doesn’t think higher education is getting the job done”. Is this perception correct, and if so, has it contributed to increased activity by accrediting associations and legislatures? Future research needs to explore these issues to determine if higher education institutions are effectively communicating aims for general education and if these aims are consistent with societal expectations for general education. A question that may be addressed in future research is: Has the failure of institutions to adequately define and communicate a clear sense of purpose for general education contributed to increased involvement of states in general education reform?

Regional accrediting agencies appeared to exert increased pressure on higher education institutions to clearly articulate goals, provide coherent sequences of courses, and assess students on goals. The influence of regional accrediting agencies was observable in comments of CAOs who either are planning a revision in general education programs or have recently completed a general education revision. Based on their comments, it seems plausible that the lower than expected proportion of institutions reporting coherent course sequencing (37.9%) or assessing student learning relative to goals (31.7%) may be indicative of an emergent practice related to small changes in emphasis within the academic community as expressed by the agencies. Increased attention from accrediting agencies may lead to increases in these critical indicators of a quality general education curriculum. Differences in accrediting regions, however, may lead to earlier or later adoption based on the accrediting region.

It also appears the movement away from loosely distributed general education programs continued to be a strong trend and that general education leaders found that loose distribution requirements are barriers to curricular coherence, and suggesting that
student choice decreases coherence. The present research suggests that emerging definitions of coherence include both the curriculum planned by faculty and the curriculum experienced by students. The literature surveyed in Chapter 2 suggests that increasing prescription does not necessarily increase coherence and meaning. A needed area for future research is evaluating if increasing prescription actually contributes to coherence.

The present research shows alternate institutional models to increase general education coherence and quality. Some models in practice are subject driven (i.e. science, math, foreign languages) while others are thematically driven (i.e. global/multicultural issues, critical thinking). Future research needs to examine how such curricula emphasizing competencies, student outcomes, and themes increase coherence and integration.

Assessment remains a challenge for institutions. Over half of all CAOs mentioned assessment as a specific challenge for their general education programs. Assessment of specific content and cognitive areas was more likely than broad based assessment at the program level. Future research needs to find what assessment strategies effectively assess broad general education goals.

General education is at a critical juncture. Attention from external and internal sources is increasing, and the current wave of reform may be a vital indicator of the future role general education will occupy in the American Baccalaureate. Increased commitment is needed to clearly define the purpose of general education, to involve students in constructing general education programs that meet their needs, to evaluate how general education helps achieve socially important goals, and to determine how
institutions can use assessment to improve the ability of general education to meet changing student needs.

While questions of quality also involve discussion of standards, equally important is the formulation of academic plans that consider how learners, teachers, and content interact and how students construct general education experiences. A communicative model may provide a framework for understanding how students, parents, legislatures, and employers understand and contribute to the meaning of general education. General education reform needs to include consideration of local and societal contexts.

The present study examined how general education changed from 1989 to 2000. It found that academic leaders perceived general education was reformed to increase curricular coherence and meaning, to meet student and faculty needs, and to update general education at their campuses. To meet these needs, general education programs decreased student choice, increased the prescription of courses, tightened distributional arrangements of courses, revised existing core curricula, and connected courses across disciplines. The present study found that external influences are indirect, that institutions internalize external influences, and that the context for general education reform includes faculty and student needs.

The study found that the pattern of general education revision changed. General education programs were more dynamic than in the past as institutions are continually modifying programs to meet changing demands on general education.

The respondents perceive that a primary role of general education is to increase coherence and meaning in the undergraduate degree. But the assumption that general education increases coherence and meaning in baccalaureate education remains untested.
This assumption began in the early 20th century and continued through the end of the present study. How or if general education increases meaning and coherence in undergraduate education needs to be critically examined.

Stark and Lattuca (1997) defined coherence in relationship to meaning. “Although the value of coherence, simply defined as studies that help students achieve a ‘meaningful whole,’ is well accepted in education, the definition of what constitutes such a program of study has gradually changed” (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 352). Stark and Lattuca found three paths to linking general and specialized study were core curricula, interdisciplinary approaches, and approaches that connect life and work (pp. 353-360). Examining the link between general and specialized education based on purpose rather than history or tradition provides “a better place to start” gathering empirical rather than rhetorical answers (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 359).

Four questions arising from their academic planning model provide a guide for future research on how planning general education contributes to meaningful undergraduate education.

1. What type of education is needed by an individual to live and work in today’s society?

2. What preparation does he or she need to function in a society that will change often before the end of his or her lifetime?

3. What types of knowledge, behaviors, values, and views characterize such a person?
4. What types of purpose, content, and instructional processes will produce the desired knowledge, behaviors, and values? (Stark and Lattuca, 1997, p. 359).

Ratcliff’s (2000) model of curricula as communication found both the curricula faculty planned and the curricula students experienced were necessary to promote meaningful curricula. Four related questions derived from his model contribute to understanding how student perceptions of the curricula influence the extent to which it is meaningful. These questions are:

1. Do students, parents, faculty, and key external constituents find the present general education program is relevant?

2. Do students, parents, faculty, and key external constituents find the present general education program provides adequate levels of information while allowing students to study subjects and links between subjects in depth?

3. Do students, parents, faculty, and key external constituents understand how goals and processes of general education meet their educational needs?

4. Do students, faculty, and key external constituents believe the general education program accurately reflects their educational needs?

This study finds that general education changed between 1989 and 2000. It discusses implications of these changes and recommends areas for future research. This dissertation concludes that a framework for improving general education should examine both the curricula planned by faculty and the curriculum experienced by students. It
suggests using two models to guide research and practice – the academic planning model (Stark and Lattuca, 1997) and the curriculum as communication model (Ratcliff, 2000). Together, these models evaluate both the planned and experienced curricula. General education research and practice are improved when guided by such models. This dissertation thus, adds to the chronicle of changes in general education practice in the United States through national studies and identifies frameworks for future studies.
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University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University.


Appendix A

Invitation and Informed Consent Form

What are the current practices and latest innovations in general education? It has been more than a decade since such a survey has been conducted, and we are writing to invite your participation in this important research endeavor.

As we approach a new millennium, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) and the Center for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) at the Pennsylvania State University are conducting a national survey on general education aims, practices and procedures – what’s new and how much has changed. Between now and the end of December, to expedite the process – saving time, money, and trees – we are using the Worldwide Web to simplify participation in the project.

Our work with colleges and universities tells us that a great deal has changed in general education, but we don’t know how much. Since the survey reported in Gaff’s New Life in the College Curriculum (1991) and since the massive catalog study conducted at CSHE (Toombs et al, 1989), we know that many innovations have been implemented. Some colleges have shifted to emphasizing teamwork and collaboration, computer and information literacy, and to using capstone courses, service learning and a variety of other innovations. Some legislatures have intervened to restrict credit hours and prescribe content in general education. Many colleges and universities have moved to assess student-learning outcomes in general education. And there may be other trends, issues and practices that need to be uncovered and highlighted. These are some of the questions we seek to address. Your participation is vital to answering these and other questions. After reviewing the consent form below this letter, please go to the following address and complete the survey.


How much time will this take?” Using a web based survey will minimize the time and trouble of completing and returning the survey. Our pilot showed that participants could complete the survey in about 30 minutes. If you who prefer paper and pen, simply print off the survey, complete it, and return it to us by fax or mail.

We plan to analyze the findings and present preliminary findings from this survey at the AAC&U General Education in the New Millennium Conference, February 24-26, 2000 in San Antonio, Texas. The final report will be completed later this spring. There is a place on the survey form where you can request that the final report be sent directly to you as soon as it becomes available.

We are looking forward to your participation. We have assigned you a security code to insure the anonymity of your response; it is listed at the top of this letter. Please be sure to enter your electronic security code and then take a few minutes to complete the survey. Thank you for your time and your assistance. Following is the informed consent form describing in more detail the research. Your completion of the survey will serve as your informed consent to participate.

Sincerely

Jerry G. Gaff,
Vice President
Association of American Colleges and Universities

James L. Ratcliff,
Professor and Senior Scientist
Center for the Study of Higher Education
Pennsylvania State University
CONSENT FORM

The American Association of Colleges and Universities and researchers at The Center for the Study of Higher Education at the Pennsylvania State University are conducting a national survey of General Education curricular practice, purpose, and philosophy. The information will be used to prepare a report on the current state of General Education at four-year colleges and universities in the United States. The report will be presented at a national conference on General Education to be held February 24-26, 2000 in San Antonio, Texas.

Individual institutions will not be identified in the report and your responses will remain confidential. Your participation in the survey is voluntary and you may decline to answer any questions. Confidentiality can only be assured to the extent available for electronic media. Completion and return of the survey is considered implied consent.

Yes, I have read this consent form and the attached letter. I agree to participate in the project, Survey of General Education in the Next Millennium.

I give permission for The American Association of Colleges and Universities and Penn State to use my survey to complete their research. I understand that my institution will not be identified in the report and that my participation in the survey is voluntary and I may decline to answer any questions. I also understand that confidentiality can only be assured to the extent available for electronic media and that completion and return of the survey is considered implied consent.
Appendix B

Chief Academic Officers Survey (CAO 2000)

General Education 2000 Survey
Chief Academic Officer Survey

About Your General Education Program:

Response security code on the e-mail notifying you of this survey: 

1a. When was the general education program at your institution last revised?

Year: 

1b. Briefly describe the primary reason(s) for making that revision:

2. How has general education changed as an institutional priority in the last ten years? (Check only one):

☐ Become less of a priority

☐ No change
3. What is the most notable feature of the general education curriculum at your institution?

4. Is the general education curriculum currently being formally reviewed?
   No ☐ Yes ☐

5. Are there plans for formally revising the general education curriculum in the next year?
   No ☐ Yes ☐

6. If you have recently made revisions to your general education curriculum, which of the following AAC&U resources did you utilize (Check any that apply):
   □ Meetings
   □ Publications
   □ Other: ____________________________

7. Describe any innovations you are exploring in general education:

8. Have the credit requirements for general education been influenced by (check all that apply):
   □
- Regional accrediting association standards;
- Specialized accrediting association standards;
- Articulation agreement(s) with other institutions;
- System coordinating or governing board;
- State coordinating or governing board;
- State legislature;
- Other external factors: 

9. During the last 10 years, how have attitudes toward general education changed for the following groups? (Check only one for each category):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Change Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>☐ Become less of a priority ☐ No change ☐ Become more of a priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty</td>
<td>☐ Become less of a priority ☐ No change ☐ Become more of a priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrators</td>
<td>☐ Become less of a priority ☐ No change ☐ Become more of a priority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10. Please rate the your general education program characteristics. To what extent does the general education program possess:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Not Very Much</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear goals.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements directly linked to goals.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments of student learning for goals.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent sequences of courses.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced courses, capstone seminars, etc.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common learning experiences for students.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential learning experiences.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service learning experiences.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman seminars.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial &amp; developmental courses.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors courses.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary courses.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent study, learning contracts.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paired or linked courses.</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior thesis or</td>
<td>1 ☐ 2 ☐</td>
<td>3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. What do you expect the greatest challenges for general education at your institution to be in the coming few years?

About You and Your Institution:

Institution name: 

Would you like to have an electronic summary of the results of this survey when completed?

No ☐  Yes ☐

We have some additional questions of the person who most directly administers the general education program and of the chair of the committee that oversees the general education program. With your permission, we would like to contact them to complete a short survey as well. If you agree to this, please list the name, address, phone and e-mail for the person who administers the general education program and the current chair of the faculty committee overseeing the general education program:

General Education Administrator:

Name: 

Address: 
City:

State: [ ] Zip Code:

Phone:

E-Mail:

Chair, Overseeing the General Education:

Name:

Title:

Address: 

City:

State: [ ] Zip Code:

Phone:

E-Mail:

Please "click" on the Submit Response button to send your response.

Submit Response  Reset Form

That’s it! Thank you for assisting us in gathering this important information on the current status of general education at colleges and
universities across the country. We appreciate that you took the time to give us a thoughtful response to each question.
Appendix C
General Education Administrator Survey (GEA 2000)

General Education Survey 2000

Response security code on the e-mail notifying you of this survey: 

1. What is the status of the general education program at your institution?:
   [ ] Not Currently Making Revisions
   [ ] Formally Reviewing Program
   [ ] Conducting Assessment of Student Outcomes
   [ ] Discussing Proposals for Change
   [ ] Implementing Changes Adopted in the Last 5 Years

2. Are there plans for revising the general education curriculum in the next year?
   [ ] No [ ] Yes

3. What is the most notable feature of the general education curriculum at your institution?
   (Use the Return key to keep your response visible)

Curricular Goals and Assessment of Student Learning
4a. Does your college or university catalog specify a general education goal in the following areas and do you assess on each goal? (Please do not respond on the basis of degree requirements; that information will be collected in a subsequent question. Check all that apply).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Areas of General Education</th>
<th>Do you have a formally stated goal in this area? (Yes/No)</th>
<th>Do you assess on this goal? (Yes/No)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy, Ethics</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math/Quantitative</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cognitive Skill Area of General Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading or Writing</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking or Listening</td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
<td><img src="Yes" alt="Yes/No" /> <img src="No" alt="Yes/No" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Computer/ Information Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Thinking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Global Studies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Diversity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education, Wellness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lifelong Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4b. Additional Comments on Curricular Goals and Assessment of Student Learning:
(Use the Return key to keep your response visible)

5. Do you currently have experimental courses or programs?:
- Yes
- No

6. How closely do goals relate to institutional mission?:
- Not Very Related
- Generally Related
- Closely Related
7. How do you communicate general education goals to faculty? 
(Use the Return key to keep your response visible)

Staffing

8. What proportion of general education courses are taught by (Check the most appropriate):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Type</th>
<th>0%-25%</th>
<th>26%-50%</th>
<th>51%-75%</th>
<th>76%-100%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Senior Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Instructors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Instructors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching assistants supervised by faculty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Curricular Requirements

9. How are credit hours recorded? (Check one):

- [] Semester hours
- [] Quarter hours
- [] Other: 

10. How many credit hours do you require for the following degrees? How have those degree requirements changed since 1990? What changes in credit hours are anticipated? (Record your answer in the table below):
11. How many total credit hours of general education are required for graduation by your institution? 

12. Have general education requirements been influenced by (check all that apply):

- Regional accrediting association standards;
- Specialized accrediting association standards;
- Articulation agreement(s) with other institutions;
- System coordinating or governing board;
- State coordinating or governing board;
- State legislature;
- Other external factors: 

13. Since 1990, has your institution changed (check all that apply):

- Changed the distribution of credits for general education
- Added new types of courses (e.g., freshman seminars, senior seminars)
- Increased interdisciplinary core courses
- Increased attention to "the canon" traditions of western civilization.
- Increased attention to gender and ethnic studies, diversity, globalization
Increased attention to certain "skills" across the curriculum (e.g. writing, critical thinking)

14a. Please give the credit hour requirement for each applicable area of general education, indicating credits that are universally required of all students and credits that can serve as an option for meeting a requirement. Also please check whether the requirement is met through disciplinary or interdisciplinary course work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area of General Education</th>
<th>Universally Required?</th>
<th>An Option in Meeting a Requirement?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Languages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philosophy, Ethics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math/Quantitative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Sciences</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Physical Sciences</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cognitive Skill Area of General Education</th>
<th>Universally Required?</th>
<th>An Option in Meeting a Requirement?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading or Writing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Curricular Organization and Pedagogy

### 15. Please rate the your general education program characteristics. To what extent does the general education program possess:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not Very Much</th>
<th>Very Much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear goals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements directly linked to goals.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessments of student learning for goals.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent sequences of courses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced courses, capstone seminars, etc.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common learning experiences for students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential learning experiences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service learning experiences.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman seminars.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial &amp; developmental courses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors courses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary courses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent study, learning contracts.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internships.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paired or linked courses.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior thesis or paper.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity or multicultural courses</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. General Education goals are explained to students by (Check all that apply):

- [ ] The institutional catalog
- [ ] The institutional worldwide web site
The institutional view book
The student advising system (i.e. Academic Advising Center)
Faculty advisors
General education goals explicitly stated on course syllabi
Faculty explanations in class
Publications on the General Education program

17. Some colleges give special emphasis to certain instructional themes across the curriculum, whether or not they change graduation requirements or curriculum structures. Please indicate whether your general education program gives special emphasis across the curriculum for the following components (Check all that apply):

- Written communication
- Oral communication
- Gender issues
- Cultural diversity
- Global studies
- Ethics or values
- Critical thinking
- Collaborative work
- Other, please specify: 

18. Some colleges review their general education programs periodically according to set criteria. Please indicate whether any of the following criteria are used in the formal review of general education at your institution. The general education program provides (Check all that apply):

- Clear goals and standards for achievement of those goals;
- Coherent, progressive learning experiences to achieve those goals;
- Opportunities for students to synthesize their learning experiences;
Opportunities for students to integrate classroom learning and out-of-class experience;
Opportunities for students to actively define and shape their learning;
Opportunities for students to practice and improve upon skills associated with the field or area studied;
Opportunities to work with others in the completion of learning tasks;
An atmosphere of inquiry where diverse backgrounds and perspectives are valued;
Experiences to assist students to make the transition to the institution;
Opportunities to overcome deficiencies prior to taking other required courses.

19. How has general education changed as an institutional priority in the last ten years? (Check only one):

- Become more of a priority
- Become less of a priority
- No change

Governance and Administration

20. Does the general education program at your institution (Check only one):

- apply to all students regardless of major, department, college or school
- vary by college or school
- vary by department or major?

21. Is there a general education faculty committee that reports to the faculty senate / faculty council?

- No
- Yes
22. Does your institution periodically review general education courses relative to approved goals?
☐ No ☐ Yes

23. Please describe the review process for general education courses at your institution:
(Use the Return key to keep your response visible)

24. If you have recently made revisions to your general education curriculum, which of the following AAC&U resources did you utilize:

☐ Meetings
☐ Publications
☐ Other:

25. Is the general education program administered by (Check the one that best applies):

☐ Dean or Director of General or Liberal Studies
☐ Dean of Liberal Arts
☐ Provost or Academic Vice President
☐ The dean of each academic college or school.
☐ General education does not have an administrative head per se.

26. What are the two greatest challenges for general education at your institution in the coming few years?
(Use the Return key to keep your response visible)


About You and Your Institution:

Institution name: ____________________________

Your position (Check one that most closely applies):

☐ Provost or vice president
☐ Dean or director of general education
☐ Dean of an academic college
☐ Chair of the general education committee
☐ Other: ______________________________________

Would you like to have an electronic summary of the results of this survey when completed?
☐ Yes  ☐ No

Please "click" on the Submit Your Survey Response button to send your response.

Submit Your Survey Response  Reset the Form

That’s it! Thank you for assisting us in gathering this important information on the current status of general education at colleges and universities across the country. We really appreciate that you took the time to give us a thorough and thoughtful response to each question.
## Appendix D

### Questions Developed from Prior Studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CAO 2000 (Appendix B)</th>
<th>GE 2000 (Appendix C)</th>
<th>Gaff (1991) (pp. 235-245)</th>
<th>Toombs et al. (1989) (pp. 11-14)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Table 5, p. 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Table 5, p. 11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14a</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Table 8, p. 14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td></td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td>27,28</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E 1 summarizes the breakdown of institutions sampled and responding into Carnegie classification. Table E 1 also provides population summaries reported by Carnegie (2000).

**Table E 1: Institutions Sampled by Institutional Type**

**CAO 2000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Type</th>
<th>AAC&amp;U Sample</th>
<th>Carnegie Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Doctoral Universities</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>25.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mater Degree Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>37.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>37.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>521</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table E 2 summarizes the breakdown of Institutional Classification for the General Education Administrators Survey sampled by Carnegie Classification. This sample was drawn from the responses of CAO’s to the CAO Survey. Table E 2 also provides population summaries reported by Carnegie (2000).

### Table E 2: Institutions Sampled by Institutional Type

#### GE 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Type</th>
<th>GE 2000 Sample</th>
<th>Carnegie Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>#</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and Doctoral Universities</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>24.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maters Degree Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>34.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baccalaureate Colleges and Universities</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>40.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Institutional control was coded using three categories as reported in the Carnegie Classifications. Table E 3 summarizes the institutions by type of control.

### Table E 3: Summary of Institutions Completing Survey by Source of Control

#### CAO 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Control</th>
<th>AAC&amp;U Number</th>
<th>AAC&amp;U %</th>
<th>Carnegie Number</th>
<th>Carnegie %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private – Not for profit</td>
<td>177</td>
<td>63.44</td>
<td>923</td>
<td>62.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private – For profit</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>529</td>
<td>35.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>279</td>
<td>100.0</td>
<td>1478</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Region was coded following regional accrediting groupings to observe differences that may be attributable to different regional accrediting associations. Table E4 provides a summary of institutions by accrediting region.

**Table E 4: Institutions by Accrediting Region – CAO 2000**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle States</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Central</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northwestern</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>22.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>6.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td>279</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix F

### Areas Emphasized in General Education Programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Emphasis</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Not very much</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>Quite a lot</th>
<th>Very much</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clear Goals</td>
<td>1.5%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>36.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requirements Linked to goals</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>35.3%</td>
<td>27.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of student learning</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>19.5%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherent sequences</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>29.1%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Courses</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>18.9%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Common learning</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>24.5%</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiential learning</td>
<td>21.7%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>25.7%</td>
<td>21.3%</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service learning</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>22.0%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman seminars</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>41.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remedial and development</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>7.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honors Courses</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interdisciplinary Courses</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>15.1%</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>29.9%</td>
<td>24.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Study</td>
<td>46.3%</td>
<td>19.6%</td>
<td>19.3%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Internships</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>13.8%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paired or Linked Courses</td>
<td>26.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>25.2%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Thesis or Paper</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
<td>10.2%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
VITA

Damon Kent Johnson

EDUCATION

2002    Ph.D.    The Pennsylvania State University
         Higher Education
         Cognate in Management and Organizations

1997    M.Ed.    Dallas Baptist University
         Higher Education

1983    BBA    Baylor University
         Business Administration

HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

2001-2002    Program Manager of Assessment
              Schreyer Institute
              The Pennsylvania State University

2000-2001    Graduate Research Assistant, Assessment Specialist
              The Leonhard Center
              The Pennsylvania State University

1998-2000    Graduate Research Assistant, ECSEL Evaluation Team
              Center for the Study of Higher Education
              The Pennsylvania State University