Taming the General Education Hydra

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Learning outcomes

Participants will:

• Articulate strategies to clarify General Education outcomes

• Identify approaches to build institutional consensus regarding the nature, purpose, and value of the General Education curriculum.
Context: Messiah College

• Private, Christian 4-year institution
• Liberal and applied arts and sciences
• Over 2,600 undergraduate students
• 90 undergraduate programs
• 19.7% underrepresented population
• 9 graduate programs (2 doctoral)
Creating a Monster:

Messiah’s General Education Program
Creating a Monster:

Why is assessing General Education so hard?

image source: https://yoso999.deviantart.com/art/ Hydra-442798792
Taming the Beast: How to keep heads from multiplying

• Clarification
• Consensus Building
• Cultivating Intentionality
• Constancy (Power of Persistence)

Image source: https://arvalis.deviantart.com/art/Hydra-466822569
Preventing Heads from Multiplying:
1. Clarification strategies

• Developing conceptual frameworks and maps
Preventing Heads from Multiplying:
1. Clarification strategies

- Developing conceptual frameworks and maps
- Securing support
Preventing Heads from Multiplying:
1. Clarification strategies

- Developing conceptual frameworks and maps
- Securing support
- Communicating institutional expectations – existing and new faculty
Preventing Heads from Multiplying:
1. Clarification strategies

• When?
When?

- systematic and periodic review
  - At “outset” and then at some interval thereafter (i.e. when GEC has assessed the data).
- Always done with a frame – why do we have the requirement in the program – and with ground rules and a moderator who’s onboard.
Preventing Heads from Multiplying:
1. Clarification strategies
2. Consensus Building

Recognizing humanity within the monster of our structures....

....from otherness to collaboration.

http://villains.wikia.com/wiki/Hydra_(Disney)?file=Hydra%28Disney%29.png
Consensus Building

- What are you *REALLY* asking?
- Agreement on the FOCUS, not the details
- Balancing expectations
- Distributive leadership

Image source: https://lol.gamepedia.com/5_Hydra_Esport
Consensus Building: What lies beneath…

• Discerning the points of resistance
• Role of focused communication in building common understanding
• Social capital
• Handling rogue faculty (Scott, 2002)

Image source: https://earofnewt.com/2014/02/04/horror-review-what-lies-beneath/
Consensus Building: Cultivating intentionality and the power of persistence/perseverance.

- Using data, communicating results
- Staying on the path
- Reminding leadership and followers where the path leads
- Being a standard bearer for long-term
Returning home: what strategies might work for you?

• Clarification strategies
  – Conceptual frameworks
  – Administrative support
  – Leverage opportunities for clarification

• Consensus strategies
  – Strategically thinking of the focus
  – Balance expectations
  – Distribute leadership
  – Be aware of what lurks beneath
  – Cultivate intentionality/persistence
Outcomes from Taming the Monster

• Increase in response rate and in usable data.
  • 50-60% course data reported; only 2/3 of that was usable data.
  • 85-95% with 100% usable data!

• Curricular revision
  • 15 of the 22 course categories revised learning objectives for their area and approval from all governance bodies

• Faculty collaboration with infographics
Why explore Non-Western Studies?

To see how people prior to and beyond western culture have shaped the world.

To be aware of cultural context and its impact on a worldview.

To grasp the impact of intercultural encounters between the Western and Non-Western societies in both past and present.

To learn from voices within non-western cultures.
Allow space for conversation

• Communicate institutional position
• “Line in the sand”
• Anticipate clash of perspectives
• Facilitate tough conversations
• Focus on long-term goal and relationships
• Learn from detractor’s/resistors to shape future conversations and improve program.
Thank you!!!
Any questions?

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Image source:
https://blog.gopheracademy.com/ad
References

Cloud, H. (2013). Boundaries for leadership: Results, relationships and being ridiculously in charge.