

**Assessment of General Education
Faculty Debriefing Comments**

March 2007

E-Mailed Comments From:

Anthony Corbeill - Classics
Gregory Freix - Business
Rick Ginsberg – Education
Karen Jorgensen - Curriculum and Teaching
Jeanne Klein – Theatre and Film
Ed Morris – Applied Behavioral Sciences
Michael Murray – Physics and Astronomy
Anton Rosenthal - History
Catherine Schwoerer - Business
Garrick Skalski – Biological Sciences

Anthony: I participated this year for the first time in two or three years and I did have one comment about the current process.

It may be due to our not having as many "cards" as we should have, but it struck me that there were no questions that required an understanding of history (or at least of history prior to the mid-20th century). I realize that we are not assessing "factual" knowledge, but I missed some of the open-ended questions that allowed students to show some familiarity with continuity and change over time. One favorite: the dinner party question--who would you invite from a writer, painter, and musician and why? (I may not have that precisely right). It was very open-ended, but allowed us to assess an awareness of something outside of 21st c. America. It would be a pity if such questions were entirely deleted.

I enjoyed, as always, the process.

Gregory: I found the session to be just what you described, frankly. I very much enjoyed the chance to meet faculty from other areas of the University. I also enjoyed meeting some really excellent, diverse young folks. One of my teams did have one of the depressing moments with a less than stunning student. Most, though, will, I'd bet, make us proud.

I did feel a bit uncomfortable at first with the scoring process, simply because I wanted to do it "right" but was not really sure what "right" was. I attended the training session with Jan and Paul interviewing Janae. That was useful, but doing it for real added some confidence.

Overall, I found the experience very positive, and I'd be happy to help again.

Rick: I was very impressed with the students and the entire process. We might help overall reliability a bit if we all used common questions, but given the purpose, it is the kind of thing that makes me proud to be associated with KU.

Karen: I had a superb time meeting new colleagues and learning much from the seniors selected for the interviews. I thought it was a well-constructed and incredibly informative process. It was great!

Garrick: You are welcome. I enjoyed it.

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Jeanne: I've been reflecting a lot on GE Assessment interviews and coming to realize more and more that many students don't appear to change any attitudes or opinions after years spent at KU. It appears many are treating college as extended high school--a place to party hardy and get ticket to employment. Those who have citizenship values had them in HS before coming to KU. Visits to other countries (during spring breaks) only give them a tourist view of cultures.

I am particularly anxious to obtain and read Jean Twenge's book, *Generation Me*: (with long subtitle) that explains how today's college students are increasingly narcissistic with feelings of entitlement about college, yet taking little responsibility for their own learning. I'm hoping her book may offer some ideas on how we as faculty might stop enabling these attitudes and behaviors and encourage students to take more responsibility for their intellectual growth.

Ed: My only question -- one raised by other faculty members -- is what becomes of the data we collect? Although the assessment interviews benefit the faculty who do them (e.g., we learned something about the KU difference or not, meet interesting colleagues), what is their benefit to the university as a whole? To be cynical for just a second: Why should I participate in the assessment if nothing systematic is done with the data I collect (other than, say, convincing the North Central that we do assessments). I'd like to see that the extensive time I put into the process makes a difference to the university. Please pass this on to Kathleen.

Catherine: I think it is interesting and worthwhile. I continue to discuss the university's general education goals in my classes and include them in my syllabus; I tell them that they are also lifetime goals that I continue to work on.

Michael: the fine arts people seemed so narrow that I wonder if they were really getting a "universal" education. I was also struck by the dislike of powerpoint lectures and the sense that an important skill to learn was simply how to regurgitate these. (This was from a pharmacy graduate). I think going abroad helps students to get more out of their time at KU.

Anton: I've been thinking about these interviews for the last couple of weeks and one thing keeps coming up in my mind: that the students I talked with had virtually no sense of what it meant to be a citizen. When we asked that question, we repeatedly got the answer "to be honest and to obey the laws." When we pushed on this, to see if they understood the Bill of Rights, or civil disobedience, even in their historical dimensions, we hit brick. My sense was that they had not progressed past high school civics lessons and really had no conception of how a democracy works and breathes, or even what it was worth. It was not surprising to read in the local newspaper this week that student voting in city elections verges on almost non-existent. Still, I find this depressing. A few years ago there was a session at the CTE Summit on an initiative surrounding civic engagement. It was led by Barbara Ballard and Bill Carswell and it was something that they had been working on for a couple of years. I'm not sure it was ever acted upon or incorporated into the curriculum and but it had some promise and I think that these gen ed assessment interviews indicate to me that on the fundamental mission of creating informed citizens who know how to act effectively in their society, we are failing. That's my two bits.