

General Education Outcomes

survey results

(109 responses)

1) The majority of respondents want to revisit, reduce, or reword the outcomes

Should we work long-term to
draft a more economical set
of outcomes?



Maximum margin of
error +/- 7%

Comments for revisiting outcomes:

- I also agree that the outcomes should be reduced to fewer but more inclusive outcomes
- I would like to see a condensed list of outcomes; then for each outcome, a list of specific courses that address each outcome in a compelling way (as a top priority, primary goal of the course). Students could choose 1 course from each list & take more electives and/or courses in their majors/minors. I think it would be positive to afford students more time & greater flexibility in course work beyond Gen Ed, because I believe that all of our courses would reinforce, or in some way compliment, the primary learning outcomes of a shaved down gen Ed program. There is considerable overlap in the goals and learning outcomes across courses and programs--it isn't necessary, in my opinion, to dictate that students address them through a heavy Gen Ed program.
- we need fewer outcomes, the current list is ridiculous. No wonder you can't get alignment
- I do think the 22 outcomes should be revisited first. Should we tweak the wording or consider merging/eliminating a few?
- I feel it is unrealistic to attempt to design a curriculum to accommodate these 22 outcomes for a number of reasons. Several of the outcomes either overlap with one another or are too nebulous to be meaningful. It would be a disservice to our students to sacrifice the depth of our their education in attempt to give them more breadth. The exposure of our students to all of the ideas and disciplines that they encounter throughout their college career goes a long way toward providing them the breadth of instruction that I think these outcomes are supposed to address. It would be beneficial for students to generate a realistic short-list of meaningful outcomes that we wish to attain, then look for places where the curriculum may be falling short
- I think we need to have less than 22 and make them easier to assess. What have some other institutions done?
- 22 outcomes are still too many.
- I don't think it would be out of line to revisit the outcomes themselves to determine if this is in fact the list of outcomes with which we want to proceed. The Gen. Ed. committee has made a tremendous effort, but contributions from the community may have prevented this process from producing a list that represents what SAU wants as the outcome of its general education
- Once more we need to revisit the outcomes and how these play a role in general education
- I'm not convinced that 10 or fewer is the goal. But I do think we can get this down to 20, 18, or somesuch number. And some of the 22 as worded are redundant, so we need to either rephrase them to indicate the point of the "extra" outcomes, or drop some
- Not just fewer, but have the cognate areas work on the language in each outcome
- Rewording them with consideration of whether we expect all students to accomplish each one, or whether we hope they will. The 22 might be fine, or it might be too many--or maybe it's not enough
- The outcomes should be simplified/reworded to fit the existing gen ed courses/requirements. It is an opportunity to be more specific about the outcomes which we are already asking the students to meet, rather than completely revising them
- As is, I find the outcomes to be so broad and vague that they are meaningless
- Fewer outcomes will facilitate assessment and easier for students to understand. Maybe the categories could be restated as the outcomes and the 22 could be objectives within these to help clarify what they mean?
- Not sure - I would have to give this more thought and study. It does seem that 22 is a rather hefty number
- We need to pare the list down to about 4-6 key ones
- They are pretty vague right now- I'd rather see fewer, but more objectives
- We may be able to reduce the number of outcomes through the process of cleaning up the wording
- The outcomes as stated still need work. For example, the outcomes covering scientific concepts and methodology do not say the students need to be able to demonstrate them.
- We may need to rethink the "outcomes." It has become more of a buzz word than useful in updating our curriculum. We are missing some crucial goals (outcomes) and repeat others
- I think most faculty do not know or understand what these outcomes means

Re-visit specific outcomes:

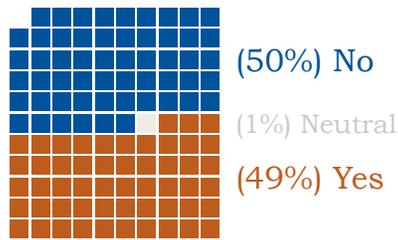
- Eliminate "plan for financial wellness; this is something people learn from the lifestyle in which they are raised. A class can't negate 18 or more years of simply having what you want when you want it. Banning cars from campus would do more to address financial planning than a course. Critical reasoning and integrated learning should be moved from the general education curriculum and into the majors. These changes would drop the number of outcomes to 18 and eliminate the most pressing challenges Fr. Bud identifies in the slides.
- 22 is a joke
- Eliminate "plan for financial wellness" and move critical reasoning and integrated learning s into the majors, dropping the number of outcomes to 18, most of which are assessable
- Financial Wellness? This is a joke. Are SAU students really that callow? I learned how to deal with money as a child. "Don't spend more money than you have." It's as simple as that. Why do we need to teach life lessons that parents should have already taught their children? It's simply not our responsibility to do that. We are not pseudo-parents
- I found outcome 8 in need of rewording

Do not revisit outcomes:

- I think the 22 outcomes work for the most part. However, I think a diversity outcome needs to be considered
- I don't think there is a magic number or an ideal minimum or maximum of outcomes. I think if the list is intuitive and fits with the mission, it doesn't matter how many there are
- I am a new faculty and don't feel familiar enough with the outcomes to comment
- Having 22 outcomes is fine, but we shouldn't need to require the students to take so many courses in order to fulfill those outcomes. Students are required to take too many General Education courses, and not enough in their majors
- Focus on the Gen Ed courses, and quit wasting faculty time on the list of outcomes! These shouldn't be cast in stone anyway - things change!

2) Respondents were split on their desire for greater curriculum/outcomes alignment

Do we want **greater alignment** between curriculum and outcomes?



Maximum margin of error +/- 7%

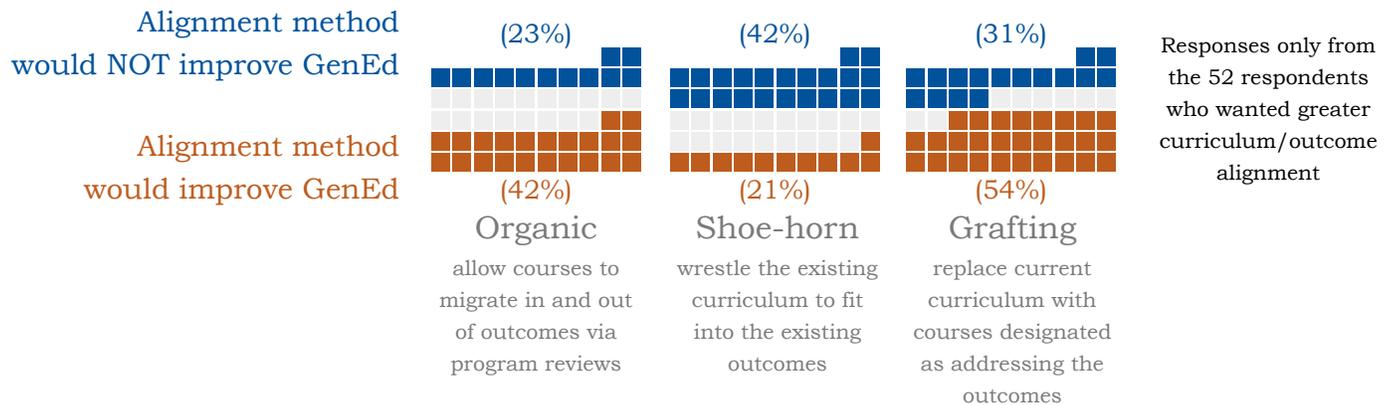
Comments for greater alignment:

- The definition of an outcome as related to education is to measure the curriculum
- I agree we need better alignment. Currently, it makes no sense and is too difficult to manage.
- The outcomes would certainly be more meaningful (and better respected) if they were linked to the curriculum
- There is little point to having outcomes unless students are required to address each of them; the only way to track this is to align them with the curricular requirements
- If we don't want alignment, why did we bother with developing the outcomes in the first place
- I think we continue to teach courses "just because we've always done it that way". There needs to be more alignment with our mission and outcomes
- An outcomes based model really calls for alignment
- This just makes sense - if we want these to be our outcomes then we need to offer courses that contribute to these outcomes
- If the objective of an outcome based general education program is to be taken seriously, there has to be almost a cause-effect alignment
- If we want students to exit their college experience with a particular set of skills and accomplishments (i.e. outcomes), then the curriculum for each student should certainly include courses that allow them to obtain these skills and realize these accomplishments. What is the purpose of having "outcomes" for our students if the courses they take do not allow them to fulfill each outcome? In addition, one course should encompass multiple outcomes to reduce the number of general education courses each student must take. (22 general education courses might be a bit unrealistic)
- Making a connection between the curriculum and outcomes allows students to come away with a clear understanding of how their courses align with a liberal arts education. Students will be able to point to particular classes and show that they developed certain skills as a result of the class, and built upon this skill in another class with similar outcomes
- The way this question is posed, the obvious answer is "yes," and I think the main challenge is in defining what we mean by "outcomes." In some cases the outcomes we voted for are quite ambitious, and there is no way a single course can result in a student meeting it. To me, many of our "outcomes" are better defined as "aspirations" and we need to define a set of experiences that will lead toward those aspirations
- I worry about the question of accountability. If we state that students are to follow a certain curriculum, we should have evidence that they are doing so. Likewise, if we state that we expect certain student outcomes, we should be able to provide evidence that these outcomes are being met. If the curriculum and outcomes were aligned, providing this evidence would be a much easier task. It seems this is somewhat of a no-brainer!

Comments against greater alignment:

- I'm wary of the idea of linking a given gen ed course to a single outcome and then requiring that every student meet every outcome
- We need to allow maximum flexibility for each professor and each course rather than impose a universal "one-size-fits-all" approach, which creates a open and shallow paradigm
- If we move to outcomes, then many courses could contribute to these outcomes. We would have to have some way of accumulating "points" or something like that for all courses. This could lead to a very complex system, and away from what a course is specifically intended to do. I don't see the advantage
- Do you really think this is going to make anyone teach any differently?

3) If greater alignment was desired, “grafting” may be the preferred method



Comments regarding the process of aligning curricular requirements to outcomes:

- The alignment of courses with outcomes should be subject to community challenge - especially if one course claims 3 or more
- A distinction needs to be made between curriculum (courses) and requirements. The problem here is requirements not curriculum. For the most part we have courses to deliver the outcomes, but we do not require students to address the outcomes, so they may or may not benefit from that curriculum. I would modify the third option above to say that students are required to address outcomes; this does not change the curriculum per se but just the requirements. Option 1 would allow some improvement but it can never address problems such as e.g. global issues outcome: unless students are required to address it, it is only a crapshoot whether they will take a course addressing it or not; also, they will take several courses addressing one outcome for no good reason
- All gen ed courses need to meet gen ed outcomes. If not, then the outcomes are hollow and lack legitimacy. Why have outcomes at all if there is no proof that they are being met? That's what the courses should do
- An alignment committee to accept applications for the inclusion of a course (experience) on the list for a specific outcome
- I am not sure how exactly to answer this question. I feel it is important to have a clear target for students (ie they should know what they should take or what they could take to satisfy each outcome) while I picture that might be something that does change periodically. So some combination of an organic approach with a framework would be best perhaps
- I may not completely understand this initiative. I think the 22 outcomes to try to achieve by taking various courses is a nightmare. I can only speak from experience. I attended a similar private institution, I believe the general outcomes were achieved in 3-5 general core courses. They were wonderfully rich courses that provided a nice background for my education. I do not believe they were trying to achieve 22 let alone 88 outcomes but I am not sure as a young student I was not paying attention to the outcomes. Maybe a set of core courses that leaves another set of outcomes to be fulfilled in other major courses? We meet several of the outcomes throughout the curriculum in our majors but they are not labeled gen ed courses. Thank you for your continued work and struggle with this issue
- I think a combination of those 3 strategies is most prudent
- I would suggest the gen ed committee attempt to define minimum expectations and separate those from aspirations. Then, seek input from student services and combine that with the feedback from departments to suggest the ways in which students might meet minimum expectations, and hopefully aspirations. The required curriculum should be left alone until we have some evidence that changing it will result in better achieving our desired outcomes
- I suspect it will take multiple approaches to improve this
- I would favor a combination of fulfilling outcomes with a minimum distribution requirement. A student would have to meet all outcomes and make sure that at least one course from humanities, traditional "natural" sciences, mathematics, fine arts, social sciences, philosophy, theology were included. There would also be a minimum number of gen ed courses one would have to take. I would also favor letting students satisfy some of the outcomes requirements in courses that would also "double dip" as majors courses - perhaps allow much more double dipping than is allowed under the present system.
- Practical logistics need to be formally addressed. How will proposed changes affect numbers of seats, numbers of sections, department course scheduling, and faculty loads? How has assessment improved? The faculty vote on the 22 gen ed outcomes may likely have turned out differently if it was presented as changing curriculum, or even possibly changing curriculum, instead of expressly presented as NOT changing curriculum. I think that the idea to have even fewer outcomes (5-6 explored repeatedly and more in depth) should be explored
- Existing general education courses could be organized into groups based on the outcomes they fulfill and students could be required to choose 1 or 2 courses from the group to fulfill a certain set of outcomes for their general education curriculum
- We might do some grafting regarding some criteria, but this could fall under the organic strategy
- How much grafting would GenEd be asking for? Is this talking about re-creating St. Ambrose's entire body of courses from scratch, or just changing a few specifically targeted courses that are inadequate to GenEd's goals. And who decides which courses are inadequate, GenEd or the courses' instructors

- Again, I believe that general education courses could be split up in to groups with each course in the group fulfilling a specific subset of the outcomes. Some of the outcomes may be possible to combine as well
- I do believe in thematic strands and cohesive and connected courses but some of the conversation puts yet more responsibility on the advisor and I am not sure my load of advisees would allow this (40+)
- We might be able to start over with Gen Ed rather than try to remodel or reconstruct an outdated model. The University Vision is to be a leading MidWestern University rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition also with a commitment to academic excellence. If we minimize the number of outcomes (from 22 to less than 10), and structure the program to require students to take 100, 200 300 level courses in each outcome, the students' ability to think critically, process information and develop as an Ambrosian will be enhanced (if not ensured). These are 18 year olds who will take a path of least resistance if given the opportunity. We need to guide them to deeper thought and obtain real meaning of our outcomes (whatever they may be). I tell my students that it is the third statistics course where they will understand statistics; we need to build skills and ability deeply, and not through checking off the gen ed worksheet. Higher level courses (designed to have deeper requirements and expectations) will allow faculty members to develop courses based on their research interests and provide a deeper connection than being mandated to teach a litany of 100 level courses

4) Some respondents have concerns about the process used by the GenEd Committee

Comments:

- It seems as though the general education committee is bulldozing its way through the back door of the faculty assembly to effect changes it deems necessary to our gen ed requirements and curriculum. It concerns me that one of the power points is about how we "should" be changing our curriculum to meet the gen ed outcomes now, rather than let the outcomes be a natural outgrowth of our curriculum. Another issue is a question about assessment: why is it that the assessment done within the classroom is somehow considered inadequate for overall assessment. Isn't that at least in part the purpose of grading?
- I am simply becoming tired of how the changes to the general education program were voted down in an open faculty vote and then how these outcomes are now being used in the way they were specifically voted down. It has just become very tedious and I end up feeling that the faculty input is not really valued as the decisions of what will occur have already been made and are being pursued - even though the changes to the system were voted down
- I am concerned by the multiple attempts of the GenEd committee to circumvent the process of Faculty Assembly voting. The outcomes were originally voted down by a quorum at Faculty Assembly, yet were brought back to the table through a Survey Monkey (which was problematic in that adjunct and visiting faculty were allowed to vote, and multiple votes could be posted by a single individual). This flawed voting paradigm triggered the committee to then take the same outcomes to EPC, which allowed for them to be incorporated in that they would NOT affect curriculum. Now, the GenEd committee is again using surveys that can be taken multiple times by a single individual as a statement for taking matters into their own hands. I, for one, do not appreciate the circumvention of the established system. Additionally, the alignment of curriculum with outcomes would cause great shifts in the classes currently taught on campus. The committee should take a serious look at the number of additional contact hours that would be required by faculty if this alignment were to occur
- The gen ed committee/director seem to be trying to make a "back door" move and go around what Faculty Assembly voted against
- There is a built in assumption in the way this question is worded. We are well aware that the 22 outcomes were a compromise that the committee did not prefer to begin with, so it is interesting that it is now being brought up again. Once again it seems as though the committee is trying for change that the faculty assembly is not in favor of. Is simplistic better than more complicated because it is simple?
- My department tried to provide input regarding the 22 but we felt we were ignored.

5) A couple respondents commented about assessment

Comments:

- I feel like a portfolio project would provide students with a critical evaluation of how they have personally met the outcomes. You provide each student a portfolio (to keep items that are significant to them/meet one of the outcomes/are proud of) and what is expected their Freshman year, then in a Senior capstone experience you have them write and reflect on how they now embody a St. Ambrose graduate. This is truly the embodiment of a liberal arts education, not just smashing either the outcomes or the curriculum together to meet in the middle
- Assess outcomes and then modify curriculum to make it more likely that the outcomes are being achieved.