



The AGLS General Education Leader's Playbook
WHO IS A GEN ED LEADER?

<p><i>Who might ask this question?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOU • Faculty • Search Committees • University Leadership 	<p><i>Who might have an answer to this question?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University Leadership • Previous gen ed leaders • Faculty • Staff
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THE BUZZER-BEATER: WHEN YOU NEED ONE PLAY FOR THE WIN

GenEd Leaders occupy a variety of positions at institutions of higher education, and an institution can have multiple general education leadership positions. The following list is not exhaustive but is meant to illustrate some of the diversity of the types of leadership roles.

- Informal leadership
 These individuals do not occupy any formal leadership position but instead exhibit leadership through their contributions to excellent pedagogy, mentorship of others, and involvement in GenEd reform efforts.
- Faculty chair of GenEd committee
 These leaders coordinate and lead the curricular or governance bodies that oversee the general education program or lead task forces or reform efforts. These chairships are often term-limited, and participation is typically counted as institutional service.
- Faculty member with reassigned time
 These leaders are typically reassigned from some of their course load to allow them to devote substantial time and effort to managing and leading general education programs. These positions may or may not be term limited.
- Full-time GenEd administrator
 These individuals devote themselves full-time to administering institution-wide programs. GenEd may be their only responsibility or part of a broader portfolio, and they may or may not teach. Often, these individuals are expected to be(come) informed about and engaged with the national discussions and initiatives concerning GenEd.
- Provosts and Presidents
 These leaders do not typically directly manage or lead Gen Ed programs, but they may determine the direction of programs by charging others with initiatives (e.g., program-wide revision).
- Assessment/accreditation staff
 Through collaboration with faculty and GenEd leaders, professionals skilled in measuring learning often provide critical guidance on constructing GenEd outcomes and curricula.

If your type of position is not on the list, please send a description to execdir@agls.org, and we'll add it to the list.

WHAT DOES A GEN ED LEADER DO? AND WHAT SKILLS, ATTRIBUTES, AND TEAMMATES DO THEY NEED TO DO IT?

Play 1: Communicate the value and details of the program

A Gen Ed Leader spends a good deal of time communicating the structure, details, and value of the general education program to a variety of stakeholders both internal and external. This starts with selling prospective students and parents on the unique and engaging nature of the program, continues on to informing advisors and new students (both traditional and transfer) on the requirements and opportunities offered by the program, and extends to reminding administration, alumni, and legislators of the importance of liberally educated college graduates for an informed public and strong democracy. The tools used to accomplish this include websites, digital and print materials, social media, presentations, and plenty of face-to-face conversations.

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be... a strong speaker and listener, persuasive, diplomatic, tactful, understanding of multiple perspectives, aware of national conversations about gen ed, able to see and work across silos.

Key Teammates: Admissions, advisors, web developers, brand managers, university relations, communicators, students (SGA, interns, etc.)

Play 2: Facilitate program assessment and evaluation

A Gen Ed leader leads, supports, facilitates, and/or reports on gen ed program assessment and evaluation both internally (to instructors and administration) and externally (to accrediting bodies for accreditation purposes) to guide continuous program improvement. The scope and nature of this work will vary greatly by institution (size, personnel, location, etc.) as well as the defined assessment process (e.g., signature assignment vs embedded assessment with rubrics vs common test, etc.).

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be committed to the relationship between assessment and good teaching, knowledgeable of best practices in course and program assessment, able to engage faculty to think about student learning as interdisciplinary, able to promote and manage change.

Key Teammates: Dept heads, accreditation liaisons, Office of Assessment and Evaluation or Institutional Effectiveness or Institutional Research (IR)

Play 3: Support shared governance

A Gen Ed leader leads, supports, facilitates, and/or reports on shared governance as it relates to the gen ed program. This may include supporting general education committees or advisory boards in the review of courses and experiences, tracking proposals working through governance, and/or reporting the results of the governance process to the institution.

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be diplomatic, tactful, a good listener, able to build consensus, able to balance stakeholders' needs, expectations, and disappointments.

Key Teammates: Committee chairs, Registrar's Office, college/dept curriculum committees

Play 4: Monitor and/or manage course enrollment and/or schedule/timetable

A Gen Ed leader monitors capacities, availability, and trends in general education course enrollments to ensure all students—regardless of major, year, or status—have access to good options to complete the requirements at a time that supports academic progress and success. This work may involve analyzing enrollment data at strategic points in the year, holding seats in high need courses for particular populations, and making departmental requests for offering more sections or adding new courses to the program.

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be... detail-oriented, student centric, able to interpret data.

Key Teammates: Registrar, Dept Heads, Advisors, Institutional Research (IR)

Play 5: Provide or coordinate faculty development opportunities

A Gen Ed leader will provide professional development opportunities for gen ed instructors and advisors, either directly or in collaboration with pedagogical experts and support staff. Topics for PD may include but are not limited to assessment, large-class pedagogy, needs of first-year and transfer students, inclusive pedagogy, course proposal writing, and/or online learning. These opportunities may come in the form of workshops, book clubs, or training modules, may be offered as an ongoing series or an annual event, may be supported through a grant or mini-grant program, and need to reach everyone from advisors to GTAs to part-time faculty to professors.

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be aware of the importance of equity and inclusion, inspirational, student centric, knowledgeable about national conversations about gen ed, able to see and work across silos.

Key Teammates: Center for Teaching and Learning, instructional designers, model instructors

Play 6: Manage credit substitution process

A Gen Ed leader manages the credit substitution process. This may include reviewing and approving credit appeals from transfer students or traditional students who have taken courses outside the approved list.

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be detailed oriented, empathetic.

Key Teammates: Advisors, dept heads, academic deans

Play 7: Facilitate (re)design and implementation of curriculum

A Gen Ed leader may lead the daunting task of designing or redesigning the general education program. This process really requires all the things... from researching and gathering ideas and models from fellow institutions to facilitating the drafting of the curriculum to tracking and communicating the progress and iterations far and wide. Once the program is approved, the gen ed leader will facilitate the implementation of the new program as it impacts advising, major degree plans, assessment, transfer, etc.

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be... diplomatic, student centric, respectful of disciplinary boundaries but able to work across them, can manage, well-rounded thinker, problem-solver, able to build teams and achieve consensus.

Key Teammates: Deans and dept heads, gen ed committee, dept/college curriculum committees, faculty senate, advisors, Registrar, center for teaching and learning, student government association, Provost and President and Board of Visitors, accreditation liaisons... basically everyone!

Play 8: Advocate to administration for resources and support

At times, a Gen Ed leader must advocate for financial and staffing support for the program. This could be related to organizational/administrative needs (e.g., communication, assessment, etc.), teaching needs (e.g., expanded sections/courses based on enrollment trends), or professional development needs (e.g., grants, conference/workshop attendance, PD events, etc.). This advocacy may be directed internally to upper administration or department heads or externally to grant funding agencies or foundations.

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be...politically astute, tactful, persuasive, able to explain how things fit together, strongly committed to gen ed, flexible, resilient.

Key Teammates: Provost and VP and/or AVPs, external grant offices, dept heads, students

Play 9: Serve as liaison and bridge across the institution

A Gen Ed leader will inform, mediate, and connect the individuals and groups (e.g., students, departments, faculty, staff, and administrators) that have a stake and role in the program but are too often siloed or disconnected across the institution. This work may involve collaboration on shared courses or co/split instruction, communication across common interests or goals, or turning a ‘turf’ wall into a bridge opportunity. This bridge-building is especially important for programs that involve transdisciplinary clusters, minors, or course groupings, crosscutting outcomes or capacities, or thematic capstone courses or experiences.

To accomplish this task, the individual must have/know/be...a strong communicator, resilient, empathetic listener, able to see and work across silos, consensus builder, able to build teams, inspirational.

Key Teammates: advisors, dept heads, instructors

CHAPTER THREE PROMPT WORKSHEET

Every sport is based on basic moves and strategies that make up the game. Every coach has favorite plays to turn to in certain moments or suited to the team’s strengths. Each play is often customized for optimum effect on the field of play.

Pages 1 to 3 of chapter 3 are a set of stock responses for you to use as needed – created from input from gen ed colleagues around the U.S. This page is designed to help you think about, create, or customize responses for the next time you are asked ‘why do we assess general education?’ Use the questions below as your prompt. Spend some time thinking about and creating responses that are customized to unique features of and approaches found in your campus’ general education program.

- What is your gen ed philosophy? Just like a teaching philosophy--your gen ed philosophy is a self-reflective statement of your beliefs about general education on your campus. Your philosophy should help to develop your ideas with specific, concrete examples of what the program should achieve, and your role in reaching the goals of your position. Importantly, your philosophy statement should also explain why you have these ideas, convey your values, beliefs, and goals to a broader audience. provides a set of criteria and/or standards to judge the quality of your gen ed work. Acquiring a philosophy is powerful, in that it directs and guides a leader’s practices, methods, and growth in their position.
- Write a short job description. Include questions like, how you envision your gen ed leadership, day-to-day responsibilities, and required skills to perform your job.
- What is the current gen ed ‘leadership’ structure on your campus? In your system (if applicable)? Do you have any ambitions or desires to change that structure? What would be the benefits of change?

- Considering the nine plays above, do you think you are strong in any of them? Is anyone on your gen ed team strong in any of those aspects? Which plays do you or your team believe need work or are missing?
- Who are your leadership teammates? Who do you need to reach out to? Who is already in your huddle and who should be?
- Who are the champions/stars, the real doers, on the campus that you haven't engaged with?
- In academics, we often talk about 'friendly critics' or 'constructive critics' who help us with projects. They are the people who will be forward and honest but kind. Who are the friendly opponents? How do you show appreciation for their input?

The responses and ideas here are not definitive. They are offered as a basis to create your own responses and ready to use materials. Of course, each time you asked this question – your answer should be specific to their concerns, which sometimes may not be what they are asking. By having on hand a set of prepared statements to serve as the foundation of a useful response, your job as a gen ed administrator will become easier.

ADVANCE PLAYS: This worksheet is designed to help you develop responses to the question posed. The next step may be to draft job descriptions of all your team positions. Include specific ideas about how the jobs support and inform other team members. Creating a list of ideal strengths for each team position may also be of value. These description do not need to be used for actual job postings—they are meant to help you consider what would be the abilities, strengths, and skills for the *absolute perfect dream gen ed team*.

Keep copies of your customized 'plays' for CHAPTER 3 in your gen ed playbook with this chapter.

*LEADERS BECOME GREAT NOT BECAUSE OF THEIR POWER BUT,
BECAUSE OF THEIR ABILITY TO EMPOWER OTHERS.*

~ John Maxwell