



The AGLS General Education Leader’s Playbook

WHAT ARE THE NECESSARY RESOURCES ANY GEN ED ADMINISTRATOR NEEDS FOR A SUCCESSFUL PROGRAM?

<p><i>Who might ask this question?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YOU • University leadership • Faculty and staff • Search committees 	<p><i>Who might have an answer to this question?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous gen ed leaders • University leadership • Faculty and staff • Colleagues at other institutions
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THE BUZZER-BEATER: WHEN YOU NEED ONE PLAY FOR THE WIN (summary)

A gen ed leader may supervise a robust office with staff, a healthy budget, and access to resources. Whereas another leader could operate as an office of one (or even one-half?) who must do a good deal on their own while relying greatly on institutional collaboration and support on a very tight budget... or anything in-between. Regardless, Gen Ed is an institution-wide program that crosses many offices, depts, units in its facilitation/operation and impact and reaches every student on campus, so any leader must rely on support from a broad far-reaching team who bring a diverse skill set, knowledgebase, and access to people and resources.

Here is a summary of the categories of support needed to lead a successful gen ed program:

1. **Human capital:** identifying, supporting, and connecting diverse stakeholders contributing to general education.
2. **Communication/marketing:** in-house as well as partners like university relations, college/dept/Provost communications, advising, etc.
3. **Assessment:** in-house as well as IR, data analysts, Institutional Effectiveness/Assessment offices, etc.
4. **Operational/logistical support:** budget, administrative staff, web/IT/data infrastructure, etc.
5. **Training/professional development:** training and PD both for the gen ed leader as well as for faculty, advisors, depts, admissions, etc.

A successful program takes ongoing commitment and attention from a variety of stakeholders, which requires time, money, and people (human capital). A good gen ed leader (who often lacks one or all of these) must work collaboratively and creatively to stretch and leverage what they do have to guide the program to fulfilling its potential.

WHAT ARE STRATEGIES TO GET THE RESOURCES YOU NEED?

Play/Strategy 1: Get by with a lot of help from your friends (colleagues)

Developing, revising, implementing, and maintaining a vibrant, equitable, and meaningful general education program **depends almost entirely on people** across the institution. The role of the GenEd Leader is to connect and support a **diverse network of stakeholders** from advising, admissions, enrollment management, instructional faculty, assessment and IR, governance committees, administration, and, of course, students, among others. By coordinating workshops and PD, supporting committees, collaborating with student groups, partnering on grants or initiatives, and consistently engaging with partner units (e.g. Registrar’s Office), the GenEd Leader can **provide folks with the things they need most to accomplish the program goals:** time, space, information, support, and a stable community on which all involved can depend. Every play listed here depends on human capital, so **start building your team ASAP!**

Play/Strategy 2: Enlist communication partners and allies

Effective communication about general education is an essential role for GenEd administrators, who must ensure that a wide variety of constituents understand both the value of general education (**the why**) and the institution's program outcomes and requirements (**the what**). Obvious constituents are those inside the institution (i.e., students, faculty, staff, administration, and board members), but there are important external constituents (e.g., parents/caregivers, alumni, donors, and legislators).

GenEd leaders need to identify the relevant constituents, determine what information needs to be communicated to each constituency, and plan how and when to best reach constituents with each message.

Given the magnitude of this task, **GenEd leaders will need communication partners and allies**. Course **instructors and advisors** probably have the biggest impact on student perceptions of the value of general education, so it is critical to engage them in conversations about the benefits of GenEd. Advisors also play an essential role in helping students understand program requirements, and **yearly training sessions with advisors** can keep them up to date on requirements and courses and help them develop more positive ways to converse with students about general education. **Faculty leaders, deans, provosts, and presidents** can be champions of general education and reinforce the centrality of general education to the mission of the institution. Because **websites** are important sources of information about programs that also serve as the face of GenEd to the outside world, collaborating with staff in **marketing, communications, and instructional design** departments can ensure that messages are clear and impactful. Partnering with **career centers** can help students connect general education to career readiness. **Admissions offices** are critical partners in communicating about the value of general education to an institution's **future students**. Through **institutional liaison offices**, GenEd leaders can communicate about the value of general education to **donors, alumni, and legislators**.

Play/Strategy 3: Gather tools, systems, and support for first-rate assessment

Gen Ed leaders need a **dedicated assessment coordinator** with a **stable support staff** and/or assessment committee.

Budgetary support is also required to fund **professional development** in best practices for assessing student learning and program outcomes. Student and program learning outcomes need to be clearly articulated and posted on departmental web sites. Another necessity is **access to data** on student learning outcomes or embedded assessments and training in how to interpret and use that data for future planning. The Gen Ed leader and assessment coordinator must also have **access to viable methods to implement changes** as they report findings to faculty and offer recommendations for course improvement; **upper administration** needs to support these important efforts. Moreover, an **assessment management system** that promotes a rigorous evaluation of course success is crucial for substantive assessment. Finally, what the Gen Ed leader learns through assessment work can inform their input into course approval, outcome review, sunset review, etc.

Play/Strategy 4: Identify key roles, procedures, and spaces

Given that a successful gen ed program depends on people across the institution, those directly involved must be supported in ways that maximize their ability to perform at high, sustainable levels. In terms of organization, a **dedicated gen ed administrator** and **administrative support** (an assistant) for scheduling, communication, etc. is required. **Job stability** in these positions is crucial with as many full-time positions as possible to continue the work over the long haul. The gen ed leader also needs **direct support from upper administration**, **access to relevant committees**, and **the ability to have input** into all decisions impacting gen ed on campus; **upper administration should promote gen ed** initiatives and regularly attend key events. Moreover, dedicated gen ed faculty and/or faculty committed to gen ed require **funding for professional development** that focuses on best practices in gen ed. Funding is also needed for **materials to publicize Gen Ed** to students and faculty. Additionally, gen ed programs have **physical requirements** such as **access to a centrally located space** that is readily identifiable as the Gen Ed area and a **defined section on the university website** that includes a guiding statement of the values endorsed by the campus. Finally, the gen ed leader must have access to a **sufficient level of IT support** and **access to registration and course scheduling information**.

Play/Strategy 5: Get the training, professional development, and support you need

Reforming General Education can be daunting, and it is often difficult to figure out where exactly to start, what resources are available to support your efforts, and how to support your institution through the process. Faculty, administrators, advisors, reform committees, and support staff will all need professional development and training throughout the reform lifecycle – from the project's conceptualization to (re)designing courses to assessment and continuous improvement. No matter if you are a seasoned Gen Ed practitioner or new to the scene, the following resources will provide you with the tools necessary to support your institution's efforts.

Professional Organizations:

- [Association of General and Liberal Studies \(AGLS of course!\)](#) - institutional and individual memberships available.
- [American Association of Colleges and Universities \(AAC&U\)](#) - institutional and individual memberships available.
- [Association for the Assessment of Learning in Higher Education \(AALHE\)](#) – institutional, individual, student, and associate memberships available.

Regional Accrediting Agencies:

- [Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges \(ACCJC\)](#) [Western Association of Schools and Colleges](#)
- [Higher Learning Commission \(HLC\)](#)
- [Middle States Commission on Higher Education \(MSCHE\)](#)
- [New England Commission of Higher Education \(NECHE\)](#)
- [Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities \(NWCCU\)](#)
- [Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges \(SACSCOC\)](#)
- [WASC Senior College and University Commission \(WSCUC\)](#)

Institutes, Conferences, and Workshops:

AGLS:

- Annual Constitute – *connect with other General Education practitioners and scholars through annual meetings. This is a fantastic opportunity to build your professional network and engage in conversations that are on the forefront of general and liberal education issues and initiatives. Programming at the AGLS Constitute is targeted specifically for Gen Ed administrators with the “Welcome to the Neighborhood” and “New to Gen Ed Administrators Bootcamp Workshop.”*
- Gen Ed Reformers Anonymous Support Group – *The Gen Ed Reformers Anonymous Support Group offers AGLS members the opportunity to gather in a safe and supportive ‘cone-of-silence’ environment with like-minded colleagues from all over to discuss and tackle all things gen ed.*
- AGLS Live Chats – *Live Chats are informal discussions, simulations, or crowd-sourcing opportunities on topics of interest to those who do gen ed work.*

AACU:

- General Education, Pedagogy, and Assessment Conference (GEPA) in April
- Institute on General Education and Assessment (IGEA) in June

Miscellaneous:

- [Assessment Institute in Indianapolis](#): Annual conference dedicated to assessing and improving higher education
- [Lilly Conferences](#): Conference series that allow for the presentation and sharing of scholarship of teaching and learning
- Any disciplinary conferences that have a teaching and learning track, particularly for nonmajors

Literature:

I. General and Liberal Education Focused:

[Journal of General Education](#): A curricular commons of the Humanities and Sciences

[Liberal Education Magazine](#): The magazine of the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

American Association of Colleges and Universities. (2020). *What liberal education looks like: What it is, who it's for, and where it happens.*

Biscotte, S. & Hanstedt, P. (2023). *Kaleidoscopes, Jazz, and Rivers: Alternative Metaphors for 'General' Education*. The Teaching Professor.

Gaston, P. L., & Gaff, J. G. (2009). *Revising general education - and avoiding the potholes*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

Hanstedt, P. (2012). *General education essentials: A guide for college faculty* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.

O'Banion Terry. "A brief history of general education." *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. 40.4 (2016): 327-334.

Smith, M. J., & Tarantino, K. L. (Eds.). (2019). *Generally speaking : the impact of general education on student learning in the 21st century* (Ser. Culture and society in higher education). Myers Education Press.

II. Higher Education Pedagogy Focused:

Darby, F., & Lang, J. M. (2019). *Small teaching online : applying learning science in online classes (First)*. Jossey-Bass, a Wiley Brand.

Eyler, J. (2018). *How humans learn : the science and stories behind effective college teaching (First, Ser. Teaching and learning in higher education)*. West Virginia University Press.

Felten, P., & Lambert, L. M. (2020). *Relationship-rich education : how human connections drive success in college*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Fink, L. D. (2013). *Creating significant learning experiences*. John Wiley & Sons.

Gurung, R. A. R., & Wilson, J. H. (Eds.). (2013). *Doing the scholarship of teaching and learning: Measuring systematic changes to teaching and improvements in learning*. Jossey-Bass.

Gurung, R. A. R., Chick, N., & Haynie, A. (Eds.). (2009). *Exploring signature pedagogies: Approaches to teaching disciplinary habits of mind*. Stylus.

Jones, B. D. (2018). *Motivating students by design: practical strategies for professors, 2nd edition*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. ([available free for download](#))

Lang, J. M. (2021). *Small teaching : everyday lessons from the science of learning (Second)*. Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

Richmond, A. S., Boysen, G. A., & Gurung, R. A. R. (2021). *An evidence-based guide to college and university teaching (2nd ed.)*. Routledge.

Richmond, A. S., Gurung, R. A. R., & Boysen, G. A. (2021). *The pocket guide to online teaching*. Routledge.

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The responses and ideas offered herein are not definitive. They are offered as a basis to create your own responses and ready to use materials. Of course, each time you are 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

The core gen ed reform leadership team can benefit from a working retreat. This could be homegrown, held at an on or off-campus location with activities for team building and strategic planning as well as reflection and prioritization. AGLS Council Members are available to join you and your team to help strategize and plan. It could also mean attending the AACU Institute on General Education and Assessment (IGEA) as a core team where there are experienced facilitators on hand to guide you through and support all aspects of the work. Or both!

The gen ed leadership team can benefit from getting an outside perspective on the current situation and plan for reform. This could come in the form of an official academic program review, a site visit, a 1-on-1 consultation, or just an informal chat via phone/zoom. AGLS has a number of consultation options to provide direct support and guidance in reforming, improving, or maintaining your general education program.

Keep copies of your customized ‘plays’ for CHAPTER 4 in your gen ed playbook with this chapter.

Our most valuable resources – creativity, communication, invention, and reinvention - are in fact, unlimited.
~ David Grinspoon