

CTL Bulletin

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A bi-weekly information sheet by the Center for Teaching and Learning

Survey Responses from NEIU Students and Faculty About the Early Years of College

This year's University Day was dedicated to the exploration of needs and perceptions both faculty and students have with regard to the transition from high school to college. In preparation for this event, we administered an online mini-survey to the faculty with questions about student expectations for and experiences with college. A parallel survey was administered to students participating in focus groups during University Day. Seventy faculty and 81 students responded to these surveys. There were interesting similarities and differences (see Item-by-Item Results on back page). The quantitative data are presented in this issue of CTL Bulletin. Open-ended responses from faculty and summaries from student focus groups will be presented in a special University Day Newsletter at the beginning of the fall semester.

- Both students and faculty agreed on the top-3 factors for graduating on time:
 1. Providing more course sections at a variety of convenient times
 2. Making sure every student gets proper advising
 3. Clearly showing the connections between courses and the requirements of students' future professions. (This item was given almost twice as much weight by the students than by the faculty)
- Most students (73%) and faculty (75%) indicated that Gen-Ed courses helped students clarify what major to choose.
- The top-three rationales for students to choose their Gen-Ed courses were:
 - 31% - "Courses needed for my program"
 - 27% - "Courses fitting my schedule"
 - 21% - "Interesting courses"Choosing "interesting courses" was the most important factor for freshmen (45%), whereas for juniors and seniors choosing courses for interest dropped to 10%. One might interpret this as an argument for creating an interesting and challenging first-year program that capitalizes on freshmen's intellectual curiosity in hopes to extend that curiosity into subsequent years.
- Faculty thought students chose their Gen-Ed courses according to:
 - 41% - "Courses fitting their schedule"
 - 20% - "Courses suggested by their advisor"
 - 17% - "Easiest courses"Only 9% of instructors thought that students would choose their courses because they sounded interesting.
- A total of 36% of students said they would take Gen-Ed courses with strong writing components, if they were offered. Only 21% reported they would not enroll in such courses. The faculty were more skeptical about this issue. Sixty one percent suspected students would not enroll in writing-intensive courses; only 9% felt they would.

Item-by-Item Results from the Mini-Survey

(Filled out online by 70 NEIU faculty between Feb. 22 and Mar. 1, and by 81 students on Mar. 3)

The student-version of this survey rephrased the items into a first-person format, e.g., “When I first started college, I expected that my courses would be more demanding than my high school classes”)

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1. When students first start college, they expect that their courses will be more demanding than their high school classes.		
a. Agree	67%	82%
b. Somewhat agree	21%	14%
c. Disagree	11%	05%
2. Once they have taken some Gen-Ed courses, students realize that those are in fact more demanding than their high school classes.		
a. Agree	43%	46%
b. Somewhat agree	41%	44%
c. Disagree	16%	10%
3. General Education courses help students clarify what major to choose.		
a. Agree	29%	27%
b. Somewhat agree	44%	48%
c. Disagree	27%	25%
4. If the University offered Gen-Ed courses with strong writing components, most students would sign up for them.		
a. Agree	09%	36%
b. Somewhat agree	30%	43%
c. Disagree	61%	21%
5. Students choose their Gen-Ed courses <u>mostly</u> based on:		
a. Which courses best fit their time schedule	41%	27%
b. Which courses their advisor suggests they take	20%	11%
c. Which courses they suspect are “the easiest”	17%	10%
d. Which courses seem most interesting	09%	21%
e. Which courses they need	13%	31%
6. The one thing that would help students most in graduating on time is:		
a. Making more academic support services available for the most challenging classes.	10%	08%
b. Providing more course sections at a variety of convenient times.	40%	41%
c. Making sure every student gets proper advising.	34%	25%
d. Requiring students to declare a major during the 2 nd year.	04%	04%
e. Clearly showing the connections between courses and the requirements of students’ future professions.	11%	21%