

UC Merced

AIARU: Panel 3 - General Education and the Research University

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Symposium**

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Panel #3: General Education and the Research University

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I'll be very brief. Peggy [O'Day], I think you gave just a superb treatise on general education so I'm not going to go into that in any more depth. Thank you for that. I think there's a couple of things that I've heard listening to everyone on this panel and throughout the day and that is the importance of integration, whether the integration is done at UCLA through cluster courses, or theme-based cluster courses, which my daughter who was an undergrad at UCLA took and absolutely loved. And or whether it's as Christopher [Viney] says was done at Oxford, that it's embedded in all the courses and it's there consistent and everyone understands what the General Ed principles are. It all boils down to resources and how much faculty and students value general education. And I would say that here at UC Merced, our faculty value General Education. We all and they all want students who know how to write. They want students who know how to communicate. None of the faculty want students that are seniors in their specialty, you know, knowledge depth courses who don't know how to communicate or who can't write. And yet, we see that. So, so we are in our model right now, we are missing, we have some gaps we need to fill so that we are not seeing seniors who

don't know how to write and don't know how to communicate. But it does boil down to resources and I think it's particularly challenging in our start-up environment because we barely have the resources to cover the majors that we are offering.

And, and it poses a lot of strain when faculty who want to have students that are, you know, who have the skills that are provided by general education are looking at, well, how do we contribute to GenEd. And I would think that this is going to change as we go forward and we do have more resources, but we do need to set the framework and the groundwork now for the structure on how we are going to move forward on that. I particularly was interested in the University of Illinois model with the faculty board, getting the faculty to come on board and to some extent that was I think what we envisioned with College One. And it hasn't worked very well and I think it hasn't worked because we're so resource constrained.

So, I would urge us to look at, to look forward to the day where, and maybe that day is not too far in the future, where we are not so resource constrained and put in place some model on the structure now on a trajectory so that we are moving towards the goal of X, whatever that X might be, whether it's integration or through whatever model and begin to set some timelines and some time posts to, to move on that trajectory toward it. Understand what we need to get there and begin to prioritize from the faculty point of view and the administrative point of view about how and when we're going to get where we want to go.

I think we all value GenEd. I think everyone realizes that it's important. But we don't know how to get there. And we don't, importantly, we don't have a trajectory. We don't have a timeline. We don't have the mileposts that say we're going to do this and this and that and when we do that we will

be so much closer to where we want to be. And if we don't do that, I think we're going to continue to flail around with, you know, limited resources and not good buy-in from the administration and faculty about this very important topic.