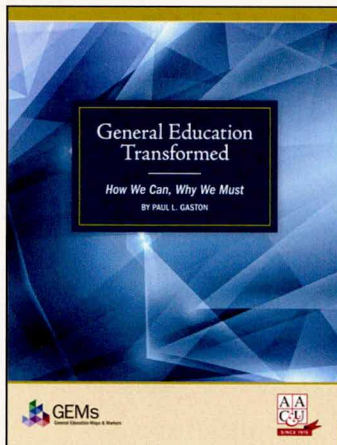


New AAC&U Publication

General Education Transformed: How We Can, Why We Must

By Paul L. Gaston



General Education Transformed calls for a re-envisioning of general education with clear, purposeful pathways for all students, allowing them to actively demonstrate their learning through high-impact practices and teaching strategies that are transferable across disciplines, departments, institutions, and even state systems.

Excerpt:

The Way Higher Education Should Be

The state of Maine prints on some of its license plates a compelling epigraph: “The Way Life Should Be.” But just as, even in Maine, life may sometimes fall short of the way it “should be,” most college students’ experiences of higher education currently fall far short of what they “should be.” At present, most students in most institutions of higher learning experience general education programs ill-designed to accomplish their stated purposes and ill-suited to ensure the wide range of learning outcomes that define degrees. Programs in disciplines (i.e., majors) are often complicit. If they fail to foster the learning and skills students achieve through general education, they may undermine what general education should accomplish.

This imperfect reality invites imagination of the way things should be. Throughout higher education, students should approach their college experiences with an informed understanding of the outcomes they should expect to achieve and of the ways in which the undergraduate curriculum—general education in concert with study in one or more major fields—will enable them to achieve those outcomes. Regardless of their family incomes, their personal backgrounds, or their institutions of choice, students should find at every stage of their college careers both ample and all-inclusive support and a commitment to intentionality: the alignment of creative, pragmatic educational paths leading through progressively more challenging study in the humanities, social sciences, arts, and sciences to clearly defined ends. These paths should lead students to graduate on time—confident in the value of their degrees, in the proficiencies they have developed, in their preparedness to contribute to the public interest and to economic competitiveness, and in their potential for further learning.

Closing the gap between the way things are and the way things should be is the goal. . . .

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