

Results from the Student Survey

Draft Report

Sub-Task Force Committee Members

Neil Aaronson

Philip Eaton

Richard Trama

Jongbok Yi

Laura Zucconi

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Sub-Task Force initiated a comprehensive student survey to gauge opinions on the current attribute/subscript system at Stockton University. The motivation behind the survey was to understand if changes proposed by the Task Force align with the student body's expectations and needs, given their central role as primary stakeholders. This decision was reinforced by the belief that students' insights are vital for making informed decisions about the educational framework, ensuring that it not only adheres to academic integrity but also fosters student success and satisfaction.

Key Findings

- **Student Demographics and Understanding:** The survey, with 152 respondents, showed a broad representation across majors and years, with a majority maintaining a GPA of 3.0 or higher. Almost 75% self-evaluated their understanding of the General Studies requirements as a 4 or 5 on a 5-point scale.
- **Student Satisfaction:** There was a notable satisfaction with the university and General Studies courses, with 77.6% expressing satisfaction with the university experience. However, satisfaction levels varied across different attributes, with the R1/R2 requirements receiving the most dissatisfaction.
- **Perception of Attributes:** Students recognized the value of attributes in contributing to a well-rounded education, though A and R attributes received less agreement. The data revealed a disconnect between students' understanding of how certain attributes align with their future goals and personal growth.
- **Attributes System Satisfaction:** A mixed response was observed concerning taking G courses out of interest versus requirement fulfillment. While there's appreciation for how attributes enrich educational experiences, R1/2 was notably contested.

Recommendations

- **Flexibility and Reduction in Requirements:** Proposals include eliminating certain attribute requirements deemed too specific to a content area and reducing the number of R1/R2 courses required. This approach would provide students with more freedom in selecting courses that align with their interests and career goals while still ensuring a comprehensive educational experience.
- **Alignment with Majors:** Many students would prefer their general studies requirements to more closely relate to their majors. If considered a means by which to enhance relevance and application of knowledge, this is acceptable, but not if it is a means of decreasing well-roundedness. We recommend tailoring requirements to reduce overlap between students' majors and their general studies courses.
- **Enhanced Information and Advising:** Improving the dissemination of information about general studies and attribute requirements is critical. Suggestions include leveraging Freshman Seminar classes for presentations on these requirements to ensure better preparedness and understanding among students.

Conclusion

The survey highlights a clear need for reform in the attribute/subscript requirements at Stockton University. While students value a well-rounded education, there is a demand for greater flexibility and relevance in course selection. Addressing these concerns is crucial for enhancing student satisfaction, success, and the overall educational value offered by the university. The Task Force's recommendations aim to balance the integrity of a liberal arts education with the practical and diverse needs of the student body, underscoring the importance of student feedback in shaping academic policies and curriculum design.

On the Need for, and Usefulness of, Student Data

When the process of collecting data for this Task Force began, a question arose regarding whether or not it would be useful to survey the student population at all. This question is predicated on the notion that doing so would be an unnecessary expenditure of effort if we already know what responses to expect. The survey was executed because, (1) even if we have strong suspicions regarding the outcome of the survey, we should not act on suspicion alone, no matter how strong; and (2) the students, as primary stakeholders in any changes this Task Force may propose to the attribute system, deserve to have their opinions and experiences heard. In the future, if our students question why we decided to make certain changes and not make other changes, it will be important to be able to assert that we did seriously consider input from the student body.

A secondary but still important concern is the need to address student success and satisfaction. While we acknowledge that we should not treat our students as “consumers,” student satisfaction likely impacts recruitment and retention. As we are frequently warned of the coming “demographic cliff,” which may lead to a precipitous decline in enrollment, it is critically important to address issues that affect our students’ happiness with their University experience. That does not mean blindly obeying the wishes of our students, but it does mean addressing their concerns.

On the Balance Between Flexibility and Required Knowledge and Skills

The General Studies curriculum can and ought to serve two basic purposes - to encourage students to become well-rounded, lifelong learners, and to ensure that our students have certain critical skills and knowledge before they graduate. The former purpose allows our students to explore fields of knowledge that spark their interest but are not closely related to their major, thus encouraging the well-roundedness of their education and giving breadth to their academic experience. The latter purpose is the reason our students have to take a variety of types of General Studies courses, as well as the reason a number of those courses must include specific kinds of content knowledge - at some point, it was deemed necessary that they be exposed to those bodies of knowledge or develop certain skills. Ideally, when students graduate from Stockton, they will have developed certain fundamental skills such as reading and writing, and also a breadth of knowledge that exposes them to a variety of new ideas and makes them more understanding of perspectives that differ from their own.

I. Respondent Demographics

The student survey gathered $N=152$ responses, approximately half of whom were underclassmen (freshman and sophomores) and half were upperclassmen (juniors, seniors, and super-seniors).

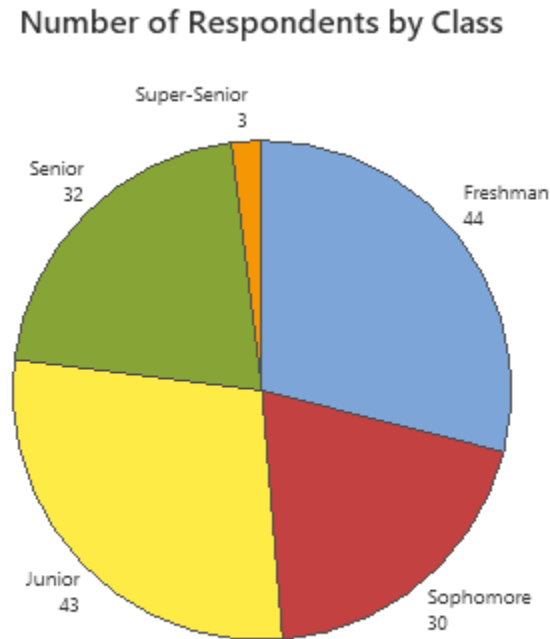
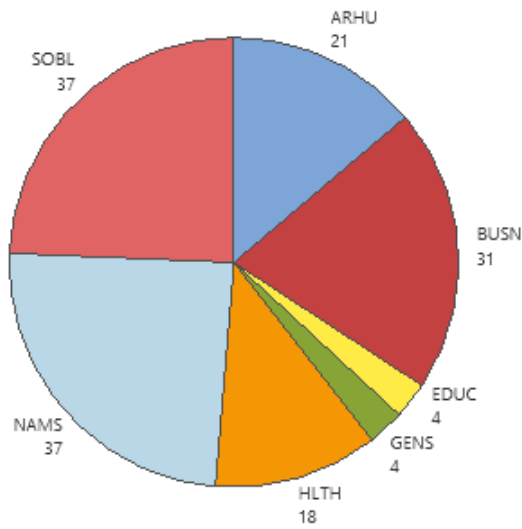


Figure 1: Pie chart of the number of respondents divided by academic year

The respondents represented each school, with more respondents from larger schools. Half of the respondents were in B.S. degree programs, 39.5% were in B.A. programs, and 6.5% were in Dual-Degree programs. The rest were undecided/undeclared majors. In all, respondents represented approximately 45 different majors.

Number of Respondents by School



Number of Respondents by Degree Type

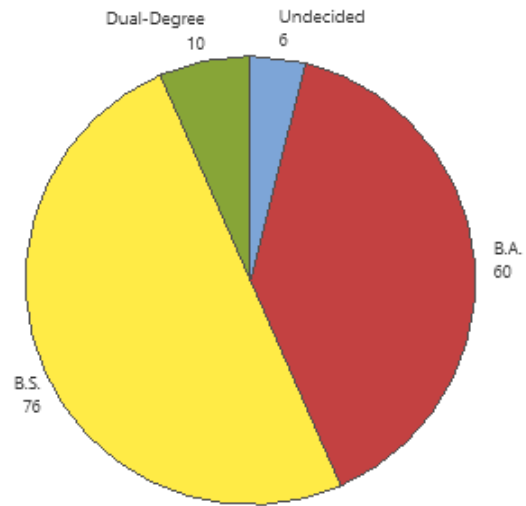


Figure 2: Pie charts of number of respondents divided by host school of their major (left) and degree type (right)

The majority (88.8%) of respondents had a GPA that was 3.0 or better.

GPA Range of Respondents

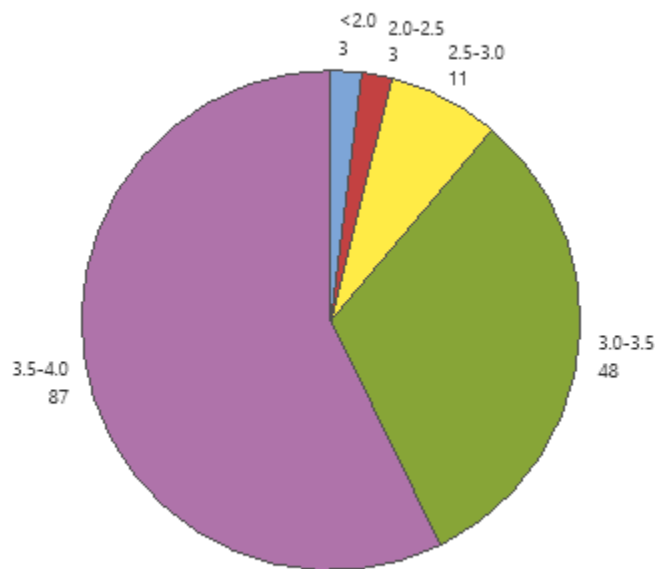


Figure 3: Pie chart of number of respondents divided by GPA range.

There was no correlation between GPA and any other response category in this study ($|r| < 0.2$)

I a. Understanding of General Studies Requirements

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 5, how well they understand the AHVI/Q/W/R requirements and how to meet them for graduation. The majority of respondents (73.7%) rated their understanding of the requirements as a 4 or 5. Only 10.5% rated their understanding as a 1 or 2. There was no correlation between the respondent's self-rating of understanding of these requirements and any other demographic index ($|r| < 0.4$).

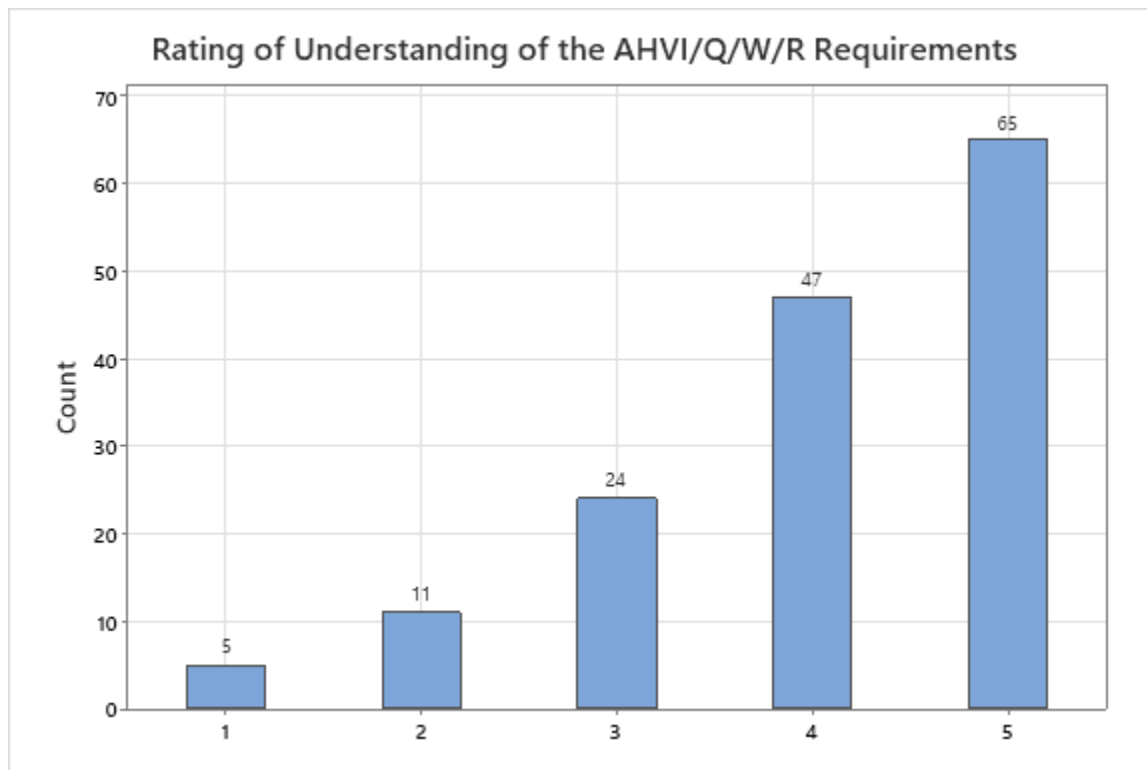


Figure 4: Bar chart of number of respondents by self-evaluation of their understanding of the AHVI and QWR requirements.

However, respondents reported less satisfaction with the availability of information on the General Studies courses and the attribute/subscript system (sec. IIc).

II. Survey of Student Satisfaction

II a. Satisfaction with Courses and Course Attributes

Respondents were asked to rate their overall satisfaction with the University as a whole, their General Studies Courses, their experience with AHVI requirements, and their experience with Q, W, and R requirements. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either satisfied or very satisfied in their experience with the University, G Courses, and each attribute and subscript type except for R1/R2.

Satisfaction with...	University	G Courses	AHVI	Q	W	R
Satisfied or Very Satisfied	77.6%	63.2%	52.6%	57.2%	57.2%	26.4%
Neutral	13.8%	25.7%	27.0%	25.0%	23%	24.3%
Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied	8.6%	10.5%	16.5%	15.8%	17.8%	33.5%
Not applicable	2.6%	0.7%	3.9%	2.0%	2.0%	15.8%

Table 1: Satisfaction with the University, General Studies courses, attributes, and subscripts as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Satisfied or Very Satisfied, Neutral, and Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied.

The respondents reported, in a large majority, overall satisfaction with the University (77.6%). It is noteworthy that the figure of 77% closely mirrors Stockton's retention rate. While this alignment may be coincidental, it could potentially shed light on factors contributing to our retention rate falling below the desired threshold.

Respondents reported satisfaction with the General Studies courses (63.2%). However, a notable portion of students, totaling 36.3%, either exhibit neutrality (25.8%) or report dissatisfaction (10.5%). These figures are particularly striking given that, as will be discussed later, students acknowledge the educational value of general studies. This discrepancy could imply dissatisfaction with the organization of Stockton's General Studies system.

A slight majority of respondents reported being satisfied with their AHVI, Q, and W courses, with less than 18% of respondents reporting dissatisfaction. The difference in satisfaction between General Studies courses and AHVI attributes potentially indicates a structural or

organizational issue leading to dissatisfaction with the attribute system rather than the courses themselves.

With regard to student satisfaction with their experience with R1/R2 requirements, 15.8% (24) of respondents chose “Not applicable.” Most of them (20) were freshmen or sophomores, who presumably had not yet taken a class with an R subscript. Two (2) of them were seniors who may not need to complete the R requirement due to their degree year. Of the remaining 128 respondents, 31.3% were satisfied or very satisfied, 28.9% were neutral, and 39.8% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied in their experience with R1/R2 courses, a rate slightly more than double the rate of dissatisfaction with AHVI, Q, or W attributes. The potential causes for this discrepancy and the more negative attitude of respondents toward the R attribute is likely due to three main (and likely non-independent) factors: opposition to the need for the R attribute, dissatisfaction with the need to take two R courses (rather than just one), and frustration with the availability and variety of courses with an R attribute. These factors will be discussed in greater detail in later sections of this report.

II b. Satisfaction with Availability of Information and Guidance

Respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the availability of information on the attributes and subscripts through University resources such as the website, as well as their satisfaction with the guidance they have received from faculty and from Academic Advising.

Satisfaction with...	Available Information	Faculty Guidance	Academic Advising Guidance
Completely Satisfied or Somewhat Satisfied	36.8%	41.5%	35.5%
Neutral	25.7%	28.9%	36.8%
Completely Unsatisfied or Somewhat Unsatisfied	37.5%	29.6%	27.7%

Table 2: Satisfaction with the availability of information, faculty guidance, and guidance from the Office of Academic Advising on general studies requirements as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Satisfied or Very Satisfied, Neutral, and Dissatisfied or Very Dissatisfied.

Respondents did not report a majority opinion on any of the available resources. They had the most positive opinions on average toward the guidance they received from faculty (e.g. through precepting), and the most negative opinions on average toward the information available to them through various University resources. The relatively large proportion of respondents with

neutral opinions in each case may indicate that respondents do not make use of these resources at all. One respondent’s comment at the end of this section reflects this:

“I have not actually asked academic advising for help finding classes with attributes.”

II c. Comments on Satisfaction and Access to Useful Resources

Respondents were asked to give comments relating to the survey questions on their satisfaction with, understanding of, and availability of information on the general studies system. Of the 152 respondents to the survey in general, *n*=42 of them supplied substantive comments in this section. Their comments were binned by their content into general “sentiments.” The most frequently-appearing sentiments (frequency > 2) are given in the table below.

Sentiment	Frequency (<i>n</i> =42)
Unsatisfied with help or availability of help from preceptors/Academic Advising/staff	7
Desire to reduce the number of required R courses/eliminate the R requirement	7
Experienced difficulty in getting into any R course	7
Frustration that Stockton requires too many G courses/classes unrelated to major	4
Feel that certain classes should have one attribute or another but do not	4
Desire for more support/information for transfer students	4
Don’t understand why the attributes/subscripts are required at all	3

*Table 3: A summary of sentiments expressed in comments regarding student satisfaction with the University, General Studies courses, attributes and subscripts, and access to information and guidance on the general studies requirements. Of 152 respondents to the survey, *n*=42 left comments in this section of the survey.*

Some of the sentiments reflected here will become common refrains throughout this survey, in particular the preference to take fewer R courses, frustration with the difficulty of getting a seat in courses with an R attribute, and the desire for General Studies courses to be aligned with a major. Unique to this section of the survey is the desire for more or better information about graduation requirements and General Studies courses. These included the following responses:

“As a transfer student, it was assumed that I knew the attributes and how to find them. When I asked questions of advisors or preceptors, they were not as helpful as I would have liked. I did much on my own.”

“preceptors (at least mine) do not really go over anything as to why you need it, they just give you exactly 4 classes to take and then say goodbye, they don't talk with you about what the next step is or anything. “

“... I got sick and gained stress weight during Fall semester of my senior year while trying to figure out - on my own- how to make everything ‘fit’ together in order to graduate on time because I was at the end of my undergraduate financial aid eligibility. ARHU was incredibly responsive and helpful, but there were failings in the precepting program and advising functions that could have prevented the ‘down to the wire’ situation I ended up in. A younger person with less motivation to make a pest of themselves & self-advocate to work it out, might have ended up paying for an extra semester out of pocket...”

II d. General Satisfaction Conclusion

Our analysis of student feedback underscores a range of sentiments regarding various aspects of the University's General Studies requirements. While a majority of students expressed satisfaction with certain components, such as General Studies coursework as a whole, notable areas of concern emerge. Specifically, the R1/2 requirement evoked considerable dissatisfaction among students, suggesting potential issues in the implementation and communication around this requirement. These findings emphasize the importance of addressing student concerns to enhance overall satisfaction and optimize the effectiveness of Stockton's General Studies program.

The responses to this section of the survey also indicated considerable dissatisfaction with the availability of and access to information about the general studies requirements. This includes the information available on the University website, but several comments from respondents also indicated a need for better precepting or better-informed staff. Recommendations regarding this need are included at the end of this report.

III. Perception of the Attributes.

Respondents were asked to rate whether or not each attribute and subscript contributed to a well-rounded education, align with their future academic and/or career goals, contribute to their personal growth beyond academic achievements, and whether or not they are happy with

the balance each attribute helps create between their major field of study and a well-rounded education.

III a. Contribution to a Well-Rounded Education

Contribute to a well-rounded education	A	H	V	I	Q	W	R
Completely agree or Somewhat agree	54.6%	64.5%	77.0%	67.1%	67.7%	75.6%	46.7%
Neutral	17.1%	19.1%	12.5%	15.1%	19.1%	19.7%	17.1%
Completely disagree or Somewhat disagree	25.7%	12.5%	8.5%	15.2%	13.2%	4.6%	32.9%

Table 4: Agreement with the statement that each attribute and subscript contributes to a well-rounded education as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Completely or Somewhat Agree, Neutral, and Completely or Somewhat Disagree.

The _____ requirements contribute to me having a well-rounded education.

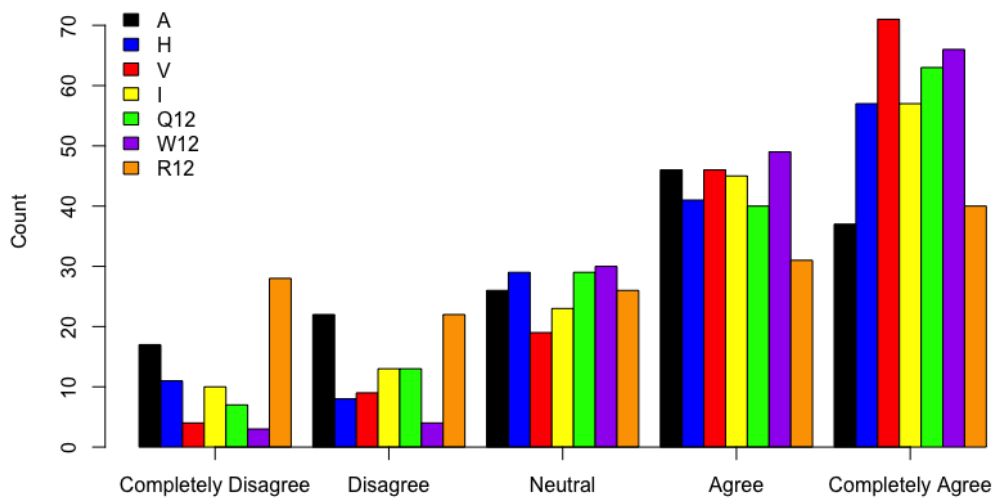


Figure 5: A histogram of the number of respondents who gave each possible response to the question of whether or not each attribute and subscript contributes to having a well-rounded education.

The majority of respondents either completely or somewhat agree that each attribute contributes to a well-rounded education with the exception of the A and R attributes, for which the percentage of respondents who completely or somewhat agreed was closer to 50% (46.7% for R, 54.6% for A). Among the AHVI attributes, the most positive response by a considerable

margin was for the V attribute (77.0%). Among the QWR subscribers, the most positive response was for the W (75.6%).

III b. Alignment with Future Academic and/or Career Goals

Align with future goals	A	H	V	I	Q	W	R
Completely agree or Somewhat agree	33.6%	39.5%	75.6%	64.5%	65.8%	73%	49.4%
Neutral	17.8%	21.7%	13.8%	17.1%	11.2%	17.1%	14.5%
Completely disagree or Somewhat disagree	46.1%	40.1%	9.8%	17.8%	21.7%	9.9%	34.9%

Table 5: Agreement with the statement that each attribute and subscript aligns with the students' future academic and career goals as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Completely or Somewhat Agree, Neutral, and Completely or Somewhat Disagree.

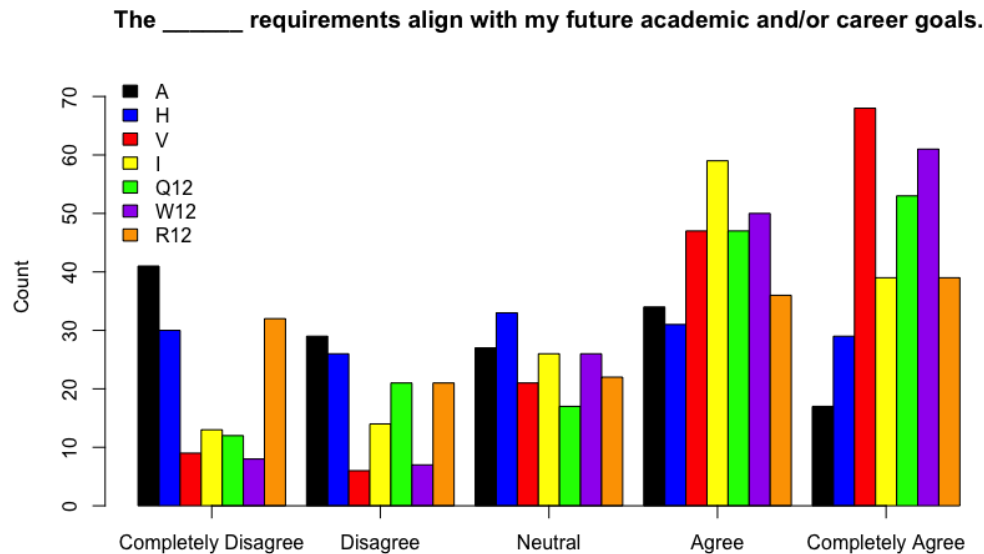


Figure 6: A histogram of the number of respondents who gave each possible response to the question of whether or not each attribute and subscript aligns with the future career and academic goals.

The data suggests that respondents, at best, do not uniformly recognize the alignment of the A, H, and R criteria with their prospective career paths and academic aspirations. Conversely, there is a distinct recognition of the correlation between the V, I, Q, and W requisites and their envisioned future endeavors.

III c. Contribution to Personal Growth Beyond Academic Achievements

Contribute to Personal Growth	A	H	V	I	Q	W	R
Completely agree or Somewhat agree	54.6%	50.6%	77.6%	67.7%	53.3%	68.4%	55.3%
Neutral	19.1%	21.1%	14.5%	19.1%	20.4%	18.4%	18.4%
Completely disagree or Somewhat disagree	25.0%	17.8%	7.9%	11.9%	26.3%	13.2%	25.0%

Table 6: Agreement with the statement that each attribute and subscript contributes to the students' personal growth beyond their academic achievements as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Completely or Somewhat Agree, Neutral, and Completely or Somewhat Disagree.

Although there are noticeable differences in response to each category, the majority of respondents acknowledged the contribution of each attribute and subscript to their personal growth beyond simply academic achievement. The most positive response was for the V attribute (77.6% completely or somewhat agree).

III d. Balance Attributes Create Between a Well-Rounded Education and Major Studies

Align with future goals	A	H	V	I	Q	W	R
Completely agree or Somewhat agree	50.0%	55.3%	67.7%	62.5%	57.3%	65.8%	42.8%
Neutral	17.8%	22.4%	19.7%	21.1%	19.1%	20.4%	18.4%
Completely disagree or Somewhat disagree	30.3%	20.4%	11.2%	15.8%	22.4%	13.9%	37.5%

Table 7: Agreement with the statement that each attribute and subscript creates a balance between a well-rounded education and their major as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Completely or Somewhat Agree, Neutral, and Completely or Somewhat Disagree.

Respondents were less positive on the question of the balance general studies courses create between a well-rounded education and their major courses. This is likely related to one of the

common themes present in this study - that many respondents want the general studies courses to relate more clearly to their major.

III e. Comments on Perception of the Attributes

Only $n=22$ respondents provided comments for this section of the survey. Their responses were binned and categorized in the same manner as the comments from the previous section (see IIc). Unfortunately, the most frequent responses were not directly related to their perceptions of the attribute system or general studies curricula but instead were reiterations of the most frequent sentiments from the previous section of the survey. Five (5) responses advocated reducing or eliminating the R attribute requirement and three (3) complained of the limited availability of courses carrying an R attribute.

A few of the comments did reflect the respondent's attitude toward the attributes/subscripts or G course system. One respondent argued that any specific requirement on the kinds of courses students must take (*i.e.* an attribute or subscript) will result in a negative attitude toward it:

"I think that students tend to dread taking classes that have certain attributes since it implies a certain subject will be discussed. If a student is not passionate about a subject, then they tend to have a more negative outlook towards the class material and the work they are assigned. Forcing certain classes doesn't give an enthusiastic response from the student body if they don't want to take the class. "

Another respondent described that V courses did not add to their educational experience because the values and ethics presented do not necessarily conform to their personal belief system.

"The reason I do not fully agree that values and ethics adds to my educational experience is that the values and ethics represented often do not reflect the values and ethics my personal belief system. Conceptually, I fully agree that values and ethics are very important."

It could be argued that this is the very reason students ought to take V courses, to expose them to new and different ideas and points of view.

One respondent described feeling that they were not free to express themselves honestly in certain courses carrying an attribute. They felt they had to "parrot the teacher" because they needed the course.

"I value diversity - Including diversity of opinion, diversity of thought, philosophy, viewpoint, but some of the attribute requirement courses are taught from an aggressive and specific viewpoint that drowns out other possibilities, and silences anyone with

even a Question about another viewpoint. I understand the purpose, and applaud the intention, but question the Wisdom of the coursework itself, in alienating some learners, who will keep quiet and parrot the teacher because its (*sic*) a required course. None of this contributes to critical thinking, or a liberal arts education. It just contributes to getting the piece of paper.”

One respondent complained that they have to take too many courses that have nothing to do with their major. This is perhaps not an uncommon sentiment among students and indicates a lack of appreciation for or interest in pursuing a well-rounded education.

Another respondent wrote that they wished there were more attributes attached to their core courses. In that case, they were depending on taking a course within their major that had a W2 attached, but when they were ready to do so, the professor who taught the course went on sabbatical so they were then stuck taking a core course plus another course to meet the W2 requirement.

One (and only one) respondent did write positively about the attribute system:

“I think that having all of these attributes available is something younger students may take for granted. Moving past college and into the working world, the importance of being a well-rounded student and not just a student who is an expert in their specified major is very important. “

III f. Conclusions

The data brings several key insights regarding students' perspectives on attribute/subscript requirements relative to their educational experience. Students face challenges understanding how the A, H, and R criteria aligns with their future goals, while readily recognizing the relevance of V, I, Q, and W to their aspirations. Despite acknowledging the contributions of AHVI, Q, W, and R to a well-rounded education, exceptions exist, notably in A and R. Furthermore, students generally appreciate the attribute/subscript system for personal growth, disparities arise again in A and R.

This data suggests that in many cases, students either do not understand the value of certain attributes and subscripts, they do not believe that certain attributes are useful or interesting to them, or they have been exposed to certain attributes and then decided they were not useful. A frequent sentiment in the free-response comments across this survey is the desire for general studies courses and the attributes to bear more relevance to students' major. Recommendations for addressing these concerns can be found at the end of this report.

IV. Satisfaction with the Attributes System

Respondents were asked whether they took G courses more out of personal interest than because it met an attribute requirement, whether or not they find the attributes enrich their educational experience, and whether they challenge them to explore new perspectives and/or areas of study.

IV a. Taking Courses Based on Interest Rather Than to Meet an Attribute

Take G courses for interest rather than for an attribute	A	H	V	I	Q	W	R
Completely agree or Somewhat agree	52.0%	46.8%	51.3%	46.7%	36.2%	47.4%	33.5%
Neutral	13.8%	19.1%	19.7%	21.7%	21.7%	19.1%	18.4%
Completely disagree or Somewhat disagree	32.2%	30.9%	27.6%	30.3%	38.8%	33.5%	46.7%

Table 8: Agreement with the statement that the respondent takes courses more based on their personal interest than on whether or not the class fulfills an attribute requirement as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Completely or Somewhat Agree, Neutral, and Completely or Somewhat Disagree.

I tend to take General Studies courses (GNM, GAH, At Some Distance, etc.) more based on my interest in the course content than on the fact the course satisfies a _____ requirement.

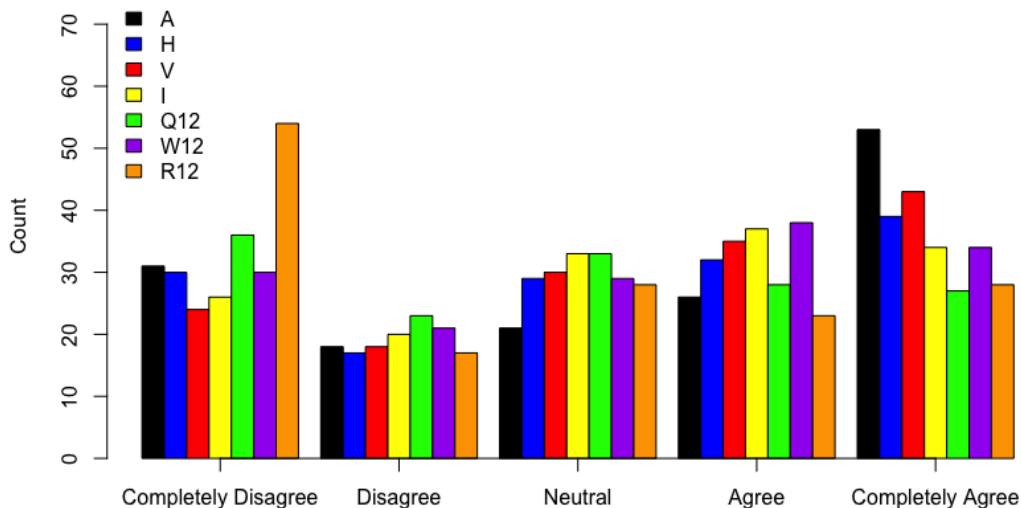


Figure 7: A histogram of the number of respondents who gave each possible response to the question of whether they take general studies courses based on interest rather than on whether or not the course satisfies a specific requirement.

The findings of this survey question were notable. On the whole, students exhibit ambivalence regarding whether they enroll in G-courses out of personal interest or solely to fulfill attribute/subscript requirements. A slight majority of respondents agree to some degree that they take A and V courses based more on personal interest than whether or not they complete a requirement. The proportion of respondents who felt that way about the H, I and W courses was slightly below 50%. Courses fulfilling the R and Q requirements appear to be taken primarily to meet attribute/subscript criteria rather than driven by genuine interest in the associated course. In this case, it is perhaps not surprising that there is a difference in response to AHVI and QWR courses. Student interest is more likely to be gauged based on course subject than skills content.

The free-response comments on this section of the survey garnered responses that most frequently centered on the lack of freedom respondents felt when selecting classes because of the need to meet so many specific requirements (see sec. IV.d).

IV b. The Attributes Enrich the Educational Experience

Enrich the educational experience	A	H	V	I	Q	W	R
Completely agree or Somewhat agree	45.4%	51.3%	59.9%	52.7%	53.2%	60.6%	42.8%
Neutral	23.7%	26.3%	24.3%	27.0%	23.7%	25.7%	19.1%
Completely disagree or Somewhat disagree	26.9%	18.4%	12.5%	17.8%	22.4%	13.8%	34.2%

Table 9: Agreement with the statement that each subscript and attribute enriches the respondent’s educational experience as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Completely or Somewhat Agree, Neutral, and Completely or Somewhat Disagree.

A majority or slim majority of respondents agreed that their educational experience was enhanced by H, V, I, Q, and W courses. Less than a majority of students agreed that A and R attributes enhanced their educational experience.

IV c. Challenge to Explore New Perspectives and/or Areas of Study

Challenge to Explore New Perspectives	A	H	V	I	Q	W	R
Completely agree or Somewhat agree	43.4%	46.7%	53.3%	58.5%	42.1%	50.6%	46.7%
Neutral	26.3%	22.4%	21.7%	19.1%	28.3%	27.0%	17.8%
Completely disagree or Somewhat disagree	25.0%	25.7%	21.1%	17.8%	27.6%	21.1%	28.3%

Table 10: Agreement with the statement that each attribute and subscript challenges respondents to explore new perspectives and/or areas of study as a percentage of respondents (N=152) whose responses were Completely or Somewhat Agree, Neutral, and Completely or Somewhat Disagree.

Respondents were split on average regarding whether or not any of the attributes or subscripts challenged them to explore new perspectives or areas of study. A slim majority of respondents agreed for the V, I, and W attributes. The consensus was slightly below majority for A, H, Q, and R.

IV d. Comments on Satisfaction with the Attribute System

Only $n=11$ respondents provided comments in response to the questions on their satisfaction with the attribute system. This time, the most frequent sentiment (with a frequency of 3) was that the number of attribute/subscript requirements effectively prevents students from taking courses based on personal interest because they need to fulfill so many other requirements. These comments were:

“I find that I can choose a class that sounds like I would learn a lot from or enjoy if it doesn’t have an attribute. This limits my education when I’m stressed to get specific attributes.”

“I think many of the requirements are redundant and create [an] imbalance between them and [my] major courses.”

“Every general class I have taken except the one this semester has been purely to satisfy attribute requirements. I have selected these classes based on how many/which requirements they satisfy alone.”

IV e. Conclusions

Lastly, the data suggests nuanced attitudes toward attribute/subscript fulfillment, with distinctions observed in the motives behind enrolling in G-courses and varying satisfaction levels with different attributes, with R1/2 garnering notable dissatisfaction. These findings underscore the importance of addressing student concerns and refining the attribute/subscript framework to better align with their educational objectives and aspirations.

Foremost, students express frustration with both the volume of requirements and the inflexibility of the existing attribute/subscript system. Their feedback consistently highlights this issue, often suggesting or seeking solutions for its resolution. The following student comment is simplistic in nature, but captures the general frustration shared by many of the students:

“There are slightly too many requirements making it somewhat difficult to focus on my major studies.”

Additional insightful student comments:

“I understand the importance of a well-rounded education, but I think the general studies requirements basically accomplish the majority of that by themselves and the attributes do not need to be as demanding. The current system results in students taking classes they have no interest in simply to obtain an attribute. They will often not perform well in classes they do not care about which can affect their GPA which (for more demanding majors) can affect their career. The overall credits requirement can stay the same to avoid losing out on tuition revenue from less attributes. This system would give students the freedom to take more classes they actually care about while still providing a well-rounded education through a lesser amount of strict attribute requirements.”

“Core classes are an important part of any education plan- but Stockton misses the boat. The idea is great but the execution falls short. With so few classes and so many students this becomes a barrier to graduation. You have to extend your time jeopardizing how you pay or having to take on more loans because you cannot get what you need in a timely fashion. You might be forced to take a class that is a mismatch for your skill set but satisfies an attribute – you take it to stay on time but jeopardize your GPA - which can impact the way you pay.”

V. Suggestions for Improvement

Respondents were asked to provide short responses to the questions of what they would add or remove from the current attribute/subscript system, and how they would structure the attribute system if they “had all the power.” They were then given one more chance to provide additional comments.

V a. What to Add/Remove from the Attribute Requirement System

Over half ($n=97$) respondents provided substantive comments when asked what they would add or remove from the attribute/subscript requirements. These comments were binned into similar “sentiments” as was done for previous comment sections and the most frequent (frequency>2) ones are outlined here.

Sentiment	Frequency ($n=97$)
Reduce required number of R courses to one	23
Eliminate the R attribute requirement entirely	12
Eliminate the A attribute requirement entirely	10
Reduce required number of W courses	10
Reduce required number of Q courses	10
More courses with attributes attached should be offered/Courses which include the relevant information or skills practice should carry the relevant attribute	8
Eliminate the H attribute requirement entirely	6
Provide more courses/availability of courses with an R attribute	5
Allow certain majors to be exempt from certain attributes	5
Eliminate the V attribute requirement entirely	4
Eliminate all attributes and subscripts	4
Merge R and V, or R and I into one attribute	4

The current system should remain unaltered	4
More ethnicities/races should be represented in R course options	3
Reduce the number of requirements in general	3

Table 11: A summary of sentiments expressed in comments regarding what students would like to add or remove from the current attribute and subscript system. Of 152 respondents to the survey, n=97 left comments in this section of the survey.

V b. If You Had All the Power...

The responses ($n=76$) to the question of how the respondents would structure the attribute system if they “had all the power” were, understandably, highly varied in the specifics of what they suggested. Certain broad themes were present, the most frequent of which was the idea that the specific attributes required of each student should be more tailored to their major. Whereas some educators might suggest that students could take fewer attributes that overlap with their core field of study (e.g. reducing the number of Q requirements for MATH majors), it was clear that the respondents in this survey who expressed this sentiment were communicating a desire to take fewer courses far removed from their major. Some of the comments related to this sentiment were:

“If I had the power I would have specific general courses to correlate with each major so it at least interests them as well as helping them with their future careers.”

“I would remove the Q1/2 requirements for majors who do not have math as part of the discipline. “

“I would set it up so that every person doesn’t get every single (*sic*) one, but that they would be filtered to what major they are applied to. For science majors, they should have more Q1/2 classes than an arts major, and an English major should have to take more w1/2 and r1/2 than a science major. “

“I would look at which degrees, majors, and minors would actually need understanding of these subjects to actually move forward. I don't see why for [redacted], that I need a racism course and an arts course.”

“I would set them up more geared towards majors. I would allow students to pick 4 out of these 7 attributes instead of forcing all of them on their degree. I think we should be able to pick which ones we want to take because some of them aren’t of interest to some people at all. “

“I would leave everything basically the same except lessen math requirements for [redacted] majors”

“I would require to take an A, H, V, I, Q1, R1, R2, and W1 because unless your major requires an additional writing or math course the students shouldn't have to pay for courses that don't help their major.”

“I recommend you remove the Q's to majors like [redacted] that do not need math.”

Whereas the purpose of the attribute system is to ensure that students are exposed to certain experiences and bodies of knowledge as part of their education, many of the respondents either do not understand that as their purpose, or understand but do not agree with that educational ideal. Similarly, sentiments that amount to a desire to take more major-related courses and fewer courses outside of the major come from either a lack of understanding, or a rejection of the purpose of general studies or the notion of a well-rounded liberal arts education.

Consistent with previous comment sections, several of the ideas stated by respondents involved reducing the number of R course requirements. The desire to add more available R courses appeared again, and the suggestion to include a wider range of courses under the R subscript (*e.g.* certain courses in victimology, Asian studies, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, gender and sexuality) with similar frequency.

Several respondents stated, in different ways, a desire for more courses to carry an attribute. There were several instances in which students related an experience in which they felt that a course they took should have had an attribute but did not. Some respondents felt that attributes should be automatically applied to courses that meet the content or skill requirement, *e.g.*:

“Courses automatically have all applicable attributes, not necessary for faculty to apply it themselves. Unless they alter the course. “

One respondent suggested that all G courses should have at least one attribute attached, and another suggested that each should have at least *two* attributes attached:

“I would make sure that every general course covers at least 2 of these attributes“

As many past and present attribute and subscript convenors attested when the full Task Force met with them, just because a course talks about [thing] or requires a lot of [skill], that does not necessarily meet the requirement to carry an [attribute] or [subscript]. A course may require students to do a significant amount of writing, for example, but the workload alone does not qualify the course to carry a W1 or W2. Faculty must learn this distinction, but the frequency of the above comments suggests that it may not be clear to a significant fraction of students what qualifies a course to have an attribute or subscript.

Of the many different responses to this question, over 25 of them involved in one way or another reducing the number of required attributes. Examples of these responses include, but are not limited to, the following:

“I would take away the A, H, Q1/2.”

"Maybe merge the Rs, V, and I? They all seem very related to each other, and there's a lot of requirements to keep track of."

"Remove A. Make H/V/I a combo where it's one of each and one additional in any of the three. Keep q/w as 1/2. Make r1 just one."

"I would make the required amount of classes per attribute only one."

"Remove one R1/2 requirement, and combine the I and H requirement."

"I would take away needing three W's and three Q's because it is a lot and sometimes its hard to find something you're interested in concerning writing and math. I would only make the requirement a W1 and a W2 and a Q1 and a Q2."

"I would have two total R1/2 classes, one of each of the attributes, and two more of someones choice."

Several comments expressed a desire for more choice in what attributes students have to take.

Examples of these include:

"I would have two total R1/2 classes, one of each of the attributes, and two more of someones choice."

"I would set them up more geared towards majors. I would allow students to pick 4 out of these 7 attributes instead of forcing all of them on their degree. I think we should be able to pick which ones we want to take because some of them aren't of interest to some people at all. "

"choose 3/4 out of 5 attributes"

"I would keep attributes around to ensure a well-rounded education, just to a lesser extent. I think the requirements should be as follows: Choose 3 out of 4 -- A/H/V/I ... Q1 ... Q2 ... Choose 1 out of 2 -- R1/R2 ... W1 ... W2"

V c. Additional Comments

Respondents were given a last opportunity to provide additional comments on the attribute/subscript and General Studies system. There were $n=41$ substantive comments. Many of the sentiments expressed were similar to those expressed in previous parts of the survey, such as the desire to better tailor the attributes to each major. Another refrain was frustration from transfer students who find they have particular difficulty in fulfilling all the requirements, as well as a similar frustration from traditional students. For example:

"Overall, it is simply a little too much to fit in for a person with any sort of abnormal transcript. As a person who transferred in with a (expletive) ton of courses to satisfy stuff all over the board, moving around to make the classes fit for a unique class schedule to satisfy a graduation timeline, along with Stockton's requirement that so many of the credits be fulfilled at Stockton, made it feel like a bit too much, and I'm sure

many non-transfers who switch majors/double major/get bad class advice from one advisor/etc. feel the same way.”

“I believe it is unfair to make students who entered Stockton from two years at a community college take extra R1/R2 classes even though they started their college career before the attributes were required in fall 2021. Additionally, it should be a given that all credits for elective classes taken at the local county colleges near Stockton University (ACCC, OCC, Brookdale, etc.) should be transferable to general studies courses.”

“Please make Stockton a non-traditional student friendly. Offer more classes on-line and after 5 PM. Do not change the attributes, I had to wait an additional semester for a class that has the Q2 attribute I need when I have a Q1 attribute that I do not need. “

Another frequent sentiment reflected the desire to reduce attribute requirements for the purpose of allowing students more freedom in choosing classes and pursuing classes that capture their interest. For example:

“I understand the importance of a well-rounded education, but I think the general studies requirements basically accomplish the majority of that by themselves and the attributes do not need to be as demanding. The current system results in students taking classes they have no interest in simply to obtain an attribute. They will often not perform well in classes they do not care about which can affect their GPA, which (for more demanding majors) can affect their career. The overall credits requirement can stay the same to avoid losing out on tuition revenue from less attributes. This system would give students the freedom to take more classes they actually care about while still providing a well-rounded education through a lesser amount of strict attribute requirements.”

“I have enjoyed Much of my general studies coursework and most of my attribute courses, I believe very much in liberal education and not just technical skills, etc - I support completely taking the amount of GEN coursework that is required- but the attribute requirements create a lot of stress- in my life and in the lives of other students I have spoken with. There just aren't Enough of some of them, and - in the most grateful, appreciative and understanding way possible- the R courses that are available are often biased to the point of restricting student learning and critical thinking.”

Some respondents expressed frustration with the current system because the difficulty in fulfilling all the requirements leads to anxiety over graduating on time and, in particular, the costs and career impact involved:

“Core classes are an important part of any education plan- but Stockton misses the boat. The idea is great, but the execution falls short. With so few classes and so many students this becomes a barrier to graduation. You have to extend your time jeopardizing how you pay or having to take on more loans because you cannot get what you need in a

timely fashion. You might be forced to take a class that is a mismatch for your skill set, but satisfies an attribute- you take it to stay on time, but jeopardize your GPA- which can impact the way you pay.”

“It's my senior year, I met the minimum credits for graduation, YET I have to take courses after courses to satisfy the OTHER requirements. It's added stress to me mentally and financially.”

Some respondents exhibited outright resentment to the current system:

“I've talked with other students about how unnecessary these attributes are for graduating. You wanna add these because you wanna look good, I get it, but you aren't fooling us. At least in my Ethics of business class, my professor talked about how the staff for Stockton isn't as ethnically various as some want to think. You wanna be diverse and progressive, start there; don't put the task on the students to learn things we already know.”

VI. Recommendations

VI a. Broad Summary of Student Input

Given the data collected from the Student Survey, certain themes emerge, the most important of which is that students want more flexibility in choosing their general studies courses. This includes flexibility in course modality and schedule, and the diversity of course offerings. Most urgently, however, students want the kind of flexibility that comes with reducing the number of attributes and subscripts they must fulfill. We feel strongly that any proposal moving forward must have the net effect of reducing the required number of attributes students are required to complete.

From this survey of students, there were several recurring themes:

1. Reduce the number of R requirements
2. Eliminate the A and H requirements
3. Reduce the number of attributes and subscripts required in general, including W and Q
4. Increase the number and availability of R-designated courses
5. Align general studies requirements better with each major
6. Ensure that classes that should have certain attributes do have them
7. Improve the availability of information about General Studies requirements and quality of precepting with regard to General Studies requirements

It should be noted that #4 in the above list was a reflection of student's frustration with getting a seat in any course with a R subscript, as made evident by their comments. This frustration and the associated anxiety some respondents feel because failure to do so would mean a delay in their graduation or additional cost to complete their degree likely add to the already present unhappiness with the R requirement.

In #5, what students seem to want is to have options for General Studies courses that directly relate to their major while being relieved of the requirement to take courses that are far removed from their field of study. This is, of course, antithetical to the underlying concept of a liberal arts education which aims to develop "well-rounded" students. As indicated in the recommendations below (VI b.), we suggest the opposite - that certain students be relieved of taking one or more G courses closely associated with their major, while being free to choose other courses that are more removed.

The student response in #6 should be familiar. The feeling among students that one of their classes should have, for example, a W1 or W2 attribute because it required them to do a large volume of writing is not uncommon. This stems from a lack of students' understanding of what the attributes and subscripts mean and what qualifies a course to have it. These misconceptions may affect how students choose classes (*e.g.* if they assume that a course without a Q1 or Q2 subscript will not require them to ever do any math) and how they engage with the course material. Students who are resentful because they do not understand why a course they are taking does not have an attribute they feel it should have will likely be frustrated or upset, have a more negative opinion of the class and instructor, and be less willing to learn.

What students want and what is best for them are sometimes at odds, and we must always keep that in mind when evaluating student feedback. However, at a time when we must be particularly concerned with retention, future enrollment, and educational value, we cannot afford to ignore or disregard the concerns of our largest group of stakeholders.

VI b. Specific Recommendations

1.1. Eliminate G requirements aligned with majors that will free up units for students but retain the broad-based educational goals of Stockton's mission as a liberal arts university. Students can still take courses aligned with their major with those free 8 credits. Students in BUSN and EDUC will still need all G categories.

- a. No GAH for ARHU majors
- b. No GNM for NAMS and HLTH majors
- c. No GSS for SOBL majors

1.2. Reduce specific G requirements to 1 GAH, 1 GEN, 1 GIS, 1 GNM, and 1 GSS for new incoming students as well as transfers, while still requiring 32 overall G credits, allowing 12 units to be student choice.

2. Eliminate the at least the A and H attributes as “too major specific” and not reflecting Stockton’s mission of teaching across the curriculum. This will free up 8 credits for students regardless of major.

3.1 Reduce the required number of R1/2 courses to one, or require one R1 course and one {R2 or V} course.

3.2 Take 4 credits of an R1 and then 8 credits from the combined group R2, V, and I (for a total of 12 credits).

4. Recommend Academic Advising, the Admission Office, and/or the academic schools themselves (depending on the most appropriate authority) develop efficient information pathways (beyond traditional email communication) to ensure students are well-informed about the general studies requirements. As evidenced earlier, students have expressed frustration with Stockton's general studies system. It's worth noting that significantly enhancing the flexibility of this system would greatly alleviate this concern. In any case, perhaps a presentation on general studies requirements could be made a part of the Freshman Seminar classes and scheduled sometime before precepting days.

VII. Appendix: Statistics and Correlations

The data collected in this survey was in the form of Likert-scale responses and free-response questions. Each Likert-scale question was equivalent to a 1-5 scale. There were 63 discrete response vectors (*i.e.* sets of responses to questions on the survey) using a Likert-scale response.

Each response vector was analyzed for normality using Anderson-Darling and Kolmogorov-Smirnov tests. No response vector was found to have a normal distribution (even at the $p < 0.2$ level). Thus, the data is best compared using nonparametric methods.

Correlation coefficients may be computed, but should be considered with some skepticism due to the nonparametric nature of the data. The figure below is a correlogram of all the Likert-scale questions in which only correlations of $r > 0.7$ were plotted in order to highlight the most significant correlations.

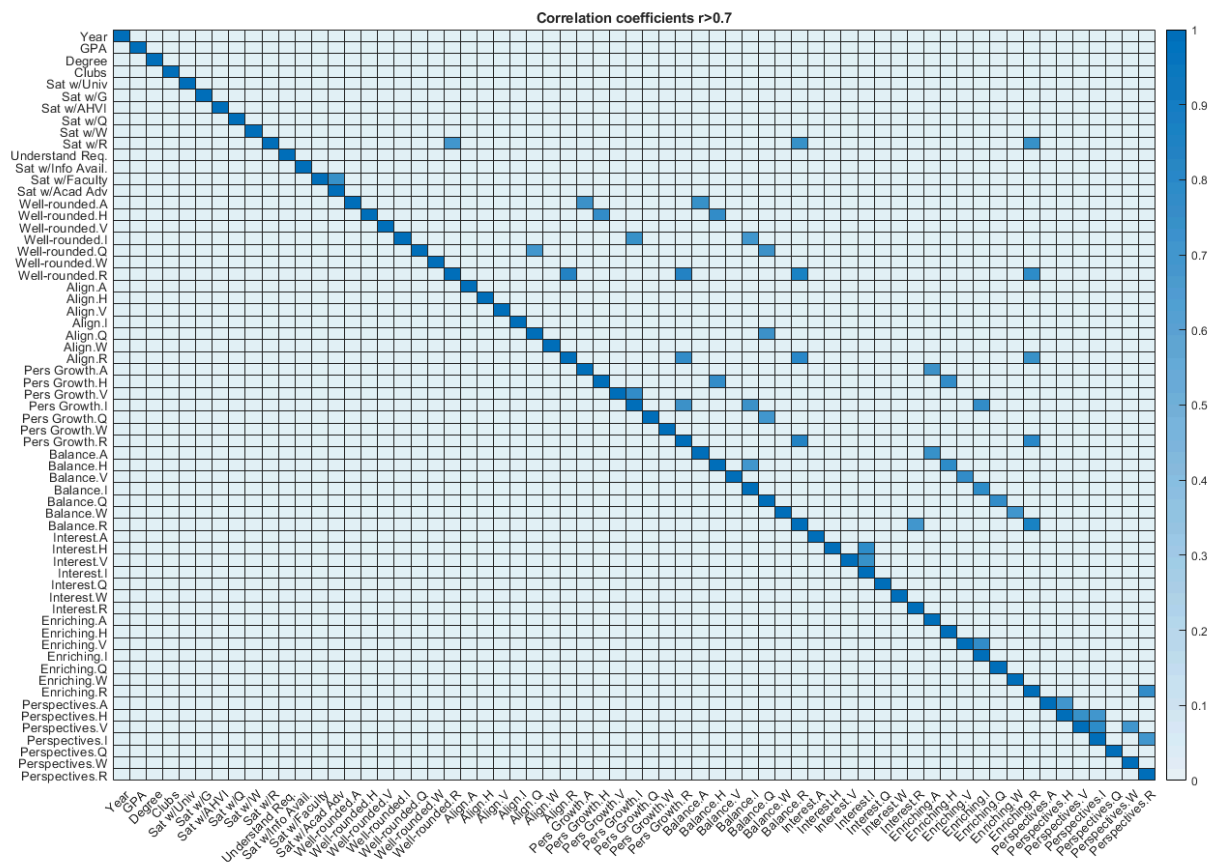


Figure 8: A grid of questions whose responses were well-correlated ($r(60) > 0.7, p < 0.05$).

In particular, there was noticeable correlation in student's responses to the questions of the balance attributes create between a well-rounded education and major (sec. III b.), and whether or not students felt they enriched their educational experience (sec. IV b.) for every attribute and subscript with itself. There was a similar correlation between the responses to the questions of personal growth and contribution to a well-rounded education for the A, H, I, and R attributes.

It is notable that there was no correlation between respondent's overall satisfaction with the University or with the G Course System to any other question. There was also no correlation between their GPA, academic year, degree type, or self-rating of understanding of the requirements with any other question.

The Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney is a nonparametric test that evaluates, for two independent samples, the null hypothesis that one sample is stochastically greater than the other. A large p -value in this test would indicate that the probability of one sample being greater than another is equal to the probability of it being less. The figure below shows the response vectors for which the Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney test produced $p > 0.8$.

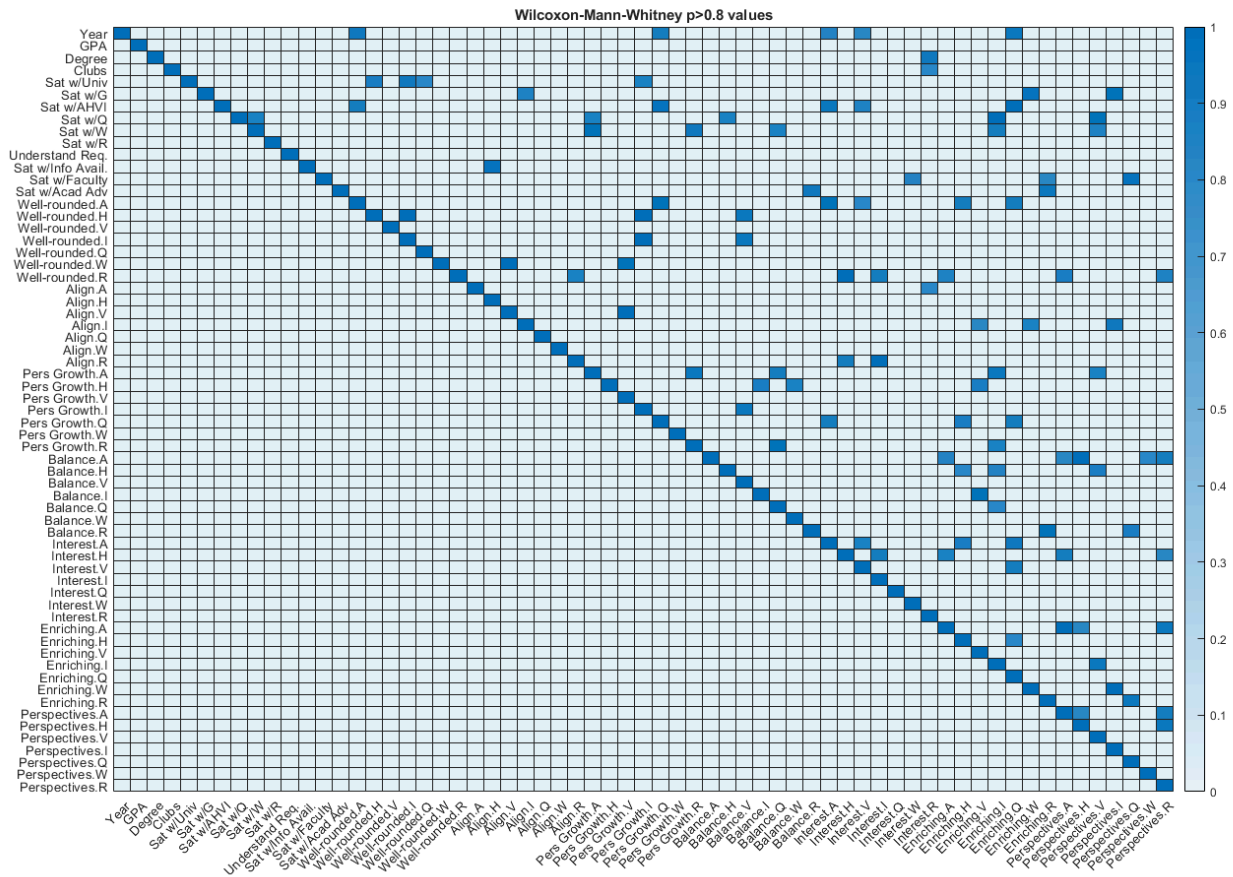


Figure 9: A grid of questions whose responses across respondents were similar according to a Wilcoxon-Mann-Whitney U-test ($p > 0.8$). This statistical hypothesis test is a non-parametric analysis on two independent samples with a null hypothesis that it is equally probable for one same to be larger than a second as it is for the second sample to be larger than the first, similar to the parametric two-sample Student's t -test.

These are the pairs of response vectors that most likely have the same median value. This is useful for identifying similar overall responses between questions.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank is a nonparametric test for samples with dependent responses to compare two matched samples, similar to a paired t -test in parametric data. A high p value in this case would indicate that, student by student, their responses to two questions were the same or very similar, regardless of whether they responded positively or negatively. A plot in which the response vectors with $p > 0.8$ are marked is shown below.

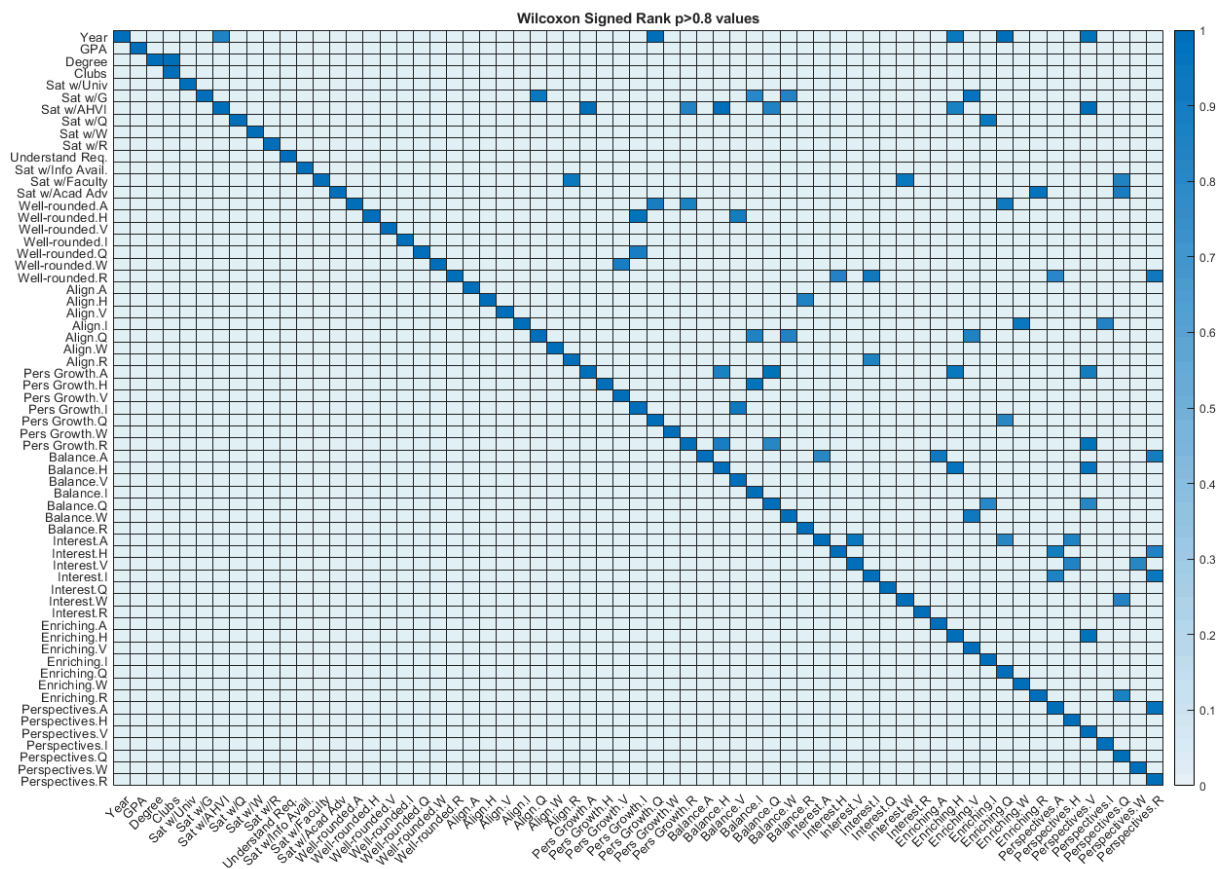


Figure 10: A grid of questions whose responses within respondents were similar according to a Wilcoxon Signed Rank test ($p > 0.8$). This statistical hypothesis test is a non-parametric analysis on the respondent-by-respondent difference between two samples with a null hypothesis that the difference will be zero, similar to the parametric paired-difference Student's t -test.

These are the pairs of questions most similar by respondent, in which each student's response was most likely to be the same for each question.