

Student Survey Results from Five-Year Review

To get the students' perspectives on the current status of the GE program, an on-line survey was designed and implemented by CAB in Fall 2017. The entire set of survey questions is included in Appendix C. The survey consisted of:

- 16 statements to which students could respond “Strongly Agree”, “Agree”, “Disagree”, or “Strongly Disagree”
- 4 additional such questions (and one free-response question) for students who were in the process of completing a pathway minor
- A list of possible reasons why students who were not in the process of completing a pathway minor could say why not
- 3 multiple-choice questions about their use of advising services, and
- 3 free-response questions about what they liked and disliked about the program and for any further comments.

Students in upper-division GE Courses in F17 were sent an e-mail to their mail.csuchico.edu accounts informing them that the survey was open on November 15, 2017. Two follow-up reminder messages were sent while the survey was open, and the survey was closed on December 14, 2017. There were just over 7000 students enrolled in these classes, though many students could have been enrolled in two or more such classes simultaneously, so there were certainly less than 7000 students contacted. Students used a link to the survey that included their campus ID. That allowed for matching of student responses to their demographic information to look for any trends. Over 900 responses were recorded, but many of those consisted of all blank (“NULL”) answers. There were 771 survey responses which had at least one valid answer (approximately an 11% response rate), 743 of which were connected to their biographical information – 28 students must have used a generic link that resulted in their not being identified.

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When asked why they chose a pathway minor (free-response question 22), 240 students gave responses. They can be grouped together into several categories, with some sample quotes given in each case:

Related to major or enhances major: 75 responses

- Ethics, Justice, and Policy: I chose this pathway because I am planning to major in Criminal Justice and this pathway would look good to have different perspectives for my major.
- I am a physical geography major and learning about sustainability helped reinforce some of the techniques I'm learning in my major
- I am a nutrition major with a marketing minor and I chose the health and wellness pathway because I felt it made the most sense. It is also the only pathway that really struck my interest!

- I am choosing my pathway minor because it will go well with my major. I agree with a lot of the idea that the GE classes that I took and am taking as of now. It also presented me with new ideas to agree with or disagree with.
- I am pursuing a GE pathway minor in Great Books and Ideas. Due to my interest in the courses and my love for books. I am in the Honors Program so the courses I was interested in were part of their requirements. I believe books also give way to critical thinking and a variety of ideas that can be allied in any field.
- I chose the Food Studies pathway because as a food and nutrition communication student, I feel I need a broad understanding of food studies. I have also spent so much time working on G.E that I felt it would be a disservice to not declare it as a pathway minor

Best suited for future or enhances career choice: 39 responses

- Because I want to work with children at some point and i wanted to learn about more about women
- Ethics, Justice, and Policy pertain to my career choice. This pathway includes classes that provide valuable knowledge that I can use in my future and in my life currently.
- I selected my pathway because I love reading and gaining more knowledge. I see myself as a lifelong learner. I enjoy soaking in interesting material to share with others. I love discussing ideas and gaining knowledge from others as well. I plan to become a teacher someday so my minor will help me with my career.
- I want to be a good leader and knowing about ethics, justice and policy in the workplace would be very beneficial
- It gave me another aspect to set me apart from other FUTURE employees, even though it is a totally different field form my MAJOR, it gives me a new perspective and set of skills.
- To put on my resume

Passion or interest about topic: 39 responses

- As Biochemistry (Pre-Med) major, I strongly feel that the wellbeing of the individual begins with the well being of the environment it inhabits as everything is interconnected. Choosing a pathway in sustainability will help me bridge these two aspects of life as I navigate my way into becoming a Medical Professional.
- I chose my pathway because I took a GE class that got me interested in the topic, and I connect personally with the topics.
- I chose my pathway because it was something I wouldn't get to explore in-depth in my major.
- I chose the pathway of sustainability because I would like to create change in the world around me and influence people to see that the world we are living in. It's in a danger situation, which has been provoked by us while a large portion of the population do not realize it. I want to change this mindset and thus form part of the movement to change the course of history.

- I have loved all my GE classes, they are usually very interesting and I love the content and my professors.
- Seemed interesting at the time and still does.

Had to pick something/random decision/serendipitous: 28 responses

- I chose the pathway because the GE classes I needed to take landed in the categories and they seemed interesting
- I did not consciously choose a Pathway Minor in International Studies, I accidentally achieved a Pathway Minor by taking random classes in GE. I work as an intern in Academic Advising Programs, and I have noticed that most students have never heard of the pathway minor, and the ones who achieve the minor do so by accident.
- I did not really choose it, it chose me based on the classes I was taking. I wish I had room to move to different things and try different experiences but I had to stick to this one pathway in the time required.
- I didn't necessarily choose one I. It so happened that many of the classes I enjoyed fell into the same category and it helped me declare my major overall.
- I had initially wanted to go into the area of my pathway and thought it would be a good insight for future classes. Once I changed my MAJOR I did not want to continue with it because I realized how tedious the courses were. I am still going through with my minor pathway because it would have been merely a waste of my time to have taken all the GE courses and have them be completely worthless.
- I wasn't specific on which pathway minor to choose. I just randomly chose the classes for my pathway minor and ended up loving it.
- It was a rushed decision and ultimately it will have little impact on my overall college CAREER. I have an overwhelmingly negative view on upper division GE courses. I picked my pathway minor because it was the best way to knock out the GC and US diversity requirements while still getting an additional benefit. I picked the tech pathway minor because it is something I know about and it would be the least painless of all of the other decisions.
- My MAJOR doesn't have a capstone so I chose one that did.
- My Pathway Minor is Gender & Sexuality Studies. I actually never planned on doing a Pathway Minor until my academic advisor pointed out that I had taken so many classes in the same column that I might as well declare it. That being said, I do feel that my Pathway minor helped me pinpoint my interests, educated me on topics I would have never otherwise known about, and that my minor is extremely applicable to not only my MAJOR, but to everyday life.

Best fit for schedule: 18 responses

- I needed USD, GC, and Writing intensive courses to graduate, the one I chose had all three.
- It was the only one available for online sociology students.

Health and Wellness Important: 12 responses

- Health is important to me, choosing the health and wellness pathway allows me to see the importance about health and gives me an opportunity to think about an optional carrier choice.
- I chose health and wellness because I am currently a Pre-nursing major. I wanted to be able to choose a pathway in which I will still learn about the body, nutrition, and anything that relates to other classes I've taken. The minor I have chosen definitely do connect with one another and it helps me a lot through my studies.

Values Diversity or Gender and Sexuality: 10 responses

- I think that it will help me out in the future with being more open minded and just by learning about different cultures.
- When I first took a cultural anthropology class I noticed how much I didn't know about the importance of being culturally aware. I was disappointed that I had done or said things that would be highly offensive to others I may surround myself with. I wanted to continue to educate myself on how diverse the world is and how to positively contribute to my society.

Easiest to complete: 8 responses

- I am pursuing my minor because I transferred to Chico and had three courses from the lower-division courses in one path. I then decided that since I didn't see the value in the upper division general education options, I would at the very least receive a minor to go with the work I was mandated to complete. There was nothing applicable to my future career goals, so my minor reflects my lower-division coursework and not my interests in my own major.

Interested in sustainability: 5 responses

- Engineering and Sustainability are two areas that go hand-in-hand, especially in a time when environmental awareness is becoming more important.

Global Development and International Issues: 3 responses

- I choose International Studies as my minor because the world is becoming more globalized and it is important to learn about global information than just domestic information. Furthermore, I just found the minor interesting.

In question 23, students who had said they were not pursuing a pathway minor were asked why not, and given a list of items they could choose, as well as an "other" category they could check and explain. Their responses, in descending order of popularity, are in Table 19.

	If you are not going to complete a Pathway minor, why not?		
Count of Q23_2	Not helpful to career	159	
Count of Q23_6	Was not aware of Pathway minors	143	
Count of Q23_1	Not interested in the available Pathways	135	
Count of Q23_3	Too complicated	73	
Count of Q23_4	Could not obtain the classes	49	
Count of Q23_5	I am taking non-GE courses as substitutions	35	
Count of Q23_7	Other (specify)	89	(85 specified)

Table 19 – Choices given by students as to why they were not completing a Pathway Minor.

Their free-responses under “other” can be categorized as such (with sample quotes included):

Time: 32

- Double majoring takes up all the space in my schedule for a four-year plan to graduate.
- I have enough units with just major courses.
- More classes added to my work load.
- I am already a semester behind.
- I don't have enough room in my schedule in order to graduate in 4 years.
- I want to graduate on TIME and the Pathway minor I thought about completing was not offered winter and summer sessions.
- I want to minor in International Relations, but I don't know when I will have the energy or TIME.

Transfer Student: 26

- I don't see the value of a minor due to having an Associate's degree.
- I transferred from an out of state school so a pathway minor was unavailable to me.
- Transferred here, I cannot start from the beginning to choose the lower division GEs all in one pathway.
- Transfer credits not accepted toward minor

Money: 5

- I do not want to waste my TIME and MONEY taking classes that most likely will not help me.
- I feel strongly that the upper division G.E. Pathway classes are just a way to make students pay more for their degrees. By requiring superfluous classes you are holding my future earning potential ransom.

Don't see the point/not related to my major: 4

- I don't see the point in taking additional classes that have nothing to do with my area of study. That being ART which has no GE courses/pathway whatsoever.
- I had a lot of AP credit, so I did not take a lot of the actual GE courses. This made it so I didn't qualify for the GE pathway minor. Also, I don't believe the minor is credited on your diploma, so I don't see the point
- My lower division core classes overlap with GE classes in separate pathways. Im not going to take extra classes for an extra minor that is unrelated to my career field.
- Wasn't too interested, there should be a pathway minor focused on arts/music.
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Not required: 3

- The general advising office told me pathway minors were only for freshman and sophomores. I was planning one and the rep told me not to do it.

Broader interests 3

- I have 3 other minors in other subjects.
- I felt that choosing a pathway would limit my exposure to other topics.

Couldn't get requirements met in one pathway 3

- I took the GE classes that also were a prerequisite for a major class, and they were in totally different pathways.
- I was not able to take all of the required classes in order.
- Too restrictive. Does not allow for flexibility when trying to explore courses or decide on a major.
- I was planning on completing a pathway minor in Sustainability, but when I got to my junior year I realized I would have to take more classes to acquire it, which is not what I was told when I was a freshman and I feel like I was lied to.

Didn't know about it 3

- I don't understand. I am taking a pathway, but I thought it was a requirement in order to graduate. If a pathway minor is something different, then I don't know what that is.
- Not sure what to minor in

AP Student/Honors 3

- I had a lot of AP credit, so I did not take a lot of the actual GE courses. This made it so I didn't qualify for the GE pathway minor. Also, I don't believe the minor is credited on your diploma, so I don't see the point
- I took honors courses as some of my GE, and those did not fall under the same pathway, thus causing me to be unable to get a pathway minor
- GE units completed in HS

Mental Health 1

- I need to graduate before my financial aid runs out. But I cannot take more than 12 units per semester due to my work schedule and my mental health load.

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On Monday, February 26, 2018, the Office of Undergraduate Education arranged for a focus group discussion involving students who had completed a Pathway minor or were in the process of completing one. 12 students were present, representing 7 Pathways. Their aggregate responses to the questions asked by facilitators are outlined below.

Question 1: How did you hear about the GE Pathway minors? Why did you choose the Pathway minor you did?

- Advising: from major advisor, GE advisor, and Summer O.
- Convenience: wanted to double count classes from major, thought content aligned well, easy to organize (info from website), already had classes that would count for the minor (ex. Honors GE courses), went as a “package” with the major.
- Seems to be an even divide between people who cite advising leading them to the minor and people who feel it was straightforward enough that they chose it and organized it on their own.

Question 2: What are some highlights of your learning in the Pathway courses? What are your main takeaways from this series of classes?

- Interdisciplinary value, exposure to different cultures and perspectives
- Provides context for classes and sense of the broader purpose of course material, connects GE to major
- Many felt the Pathway supplemented or applied well to their major
- (Specific learning relevant to each Pathway noted in detailed notes)

Question 3: Did you feel a sense of coherence across these classes? Can you describe any valuable connections or overlap between courses in the Pathway?

- In general there is a good sense of coherence and connection both between classes in minor and between minor and major (more limited in International Studies, where the only common thread was “not the U.S.”)
- Students who have only taken lower division classes report fewer connections between classes in the Pathway
- Varies based on subject, most students named 2 or 3 classes that paired well

Question 4: Did pursuing the minor make it any harder to graduate?

- No reports of slowing down graduation personally, though one reported that other students have said this
- Getting into required classes is easy and double counting with major helped with efficiency

Question 5: Do you think you’ll make use of this minor in your career or further studies? How?

- Viewed as an asset for resumes and interviews
- Broadened perspective (diversity) and skillset (Spanish language) is expected to be valued in workplace
- Beneficial in continuing to grad school in related subject

Question 6: Were there any disappointments in this Pathway? What could have improved your experience? Are there changes you'd like to see to the Pathway minors or GE program as a whole?

- Mostly very positive, few suggestions for improvements
- Information--let students know how easy minoring is, have profs inform about Pathway minors during syllabus week
- More choices, there are too few options for classes per "stone"
- One said that classes in the Pathway should be more broad, another said that not all required classes related closely enough to the Pathway