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Reflection on Required General Education

1. What are your current short/long term goals (academic, career, & personal)? You may include your “ideal” career in engineering or your preferred working environment.

As a non-traditional student with a long employment history I feel that my career trajectory is fairly well defined. I have a strong background in electronics and years of experience as a Hardware Technician working with a wide variety of computer and electronic equipment. My most satisfying jobs have been those working on research and development teams. I also love to travel and experience new cultures. I would say my ideal post-graduation job would be in Europe or Asia working in research and development on embedded technology. Ideally this technology would contribute to people’s lives in a meaningful and positive way.

2. What have you learned in your general education electives, which allow you to evaluate and formulate engineering solutions in problem solving and innovation beyond the technical aspects in problem solving? How do general education classes help you to think about an engineering problem?

Like most engineers I grumbled about my general education classes and felt that they were extraneous and diverting me from classes that were more applicable to my career goals. In retrospect however, nothing could be further from the truth. General Education classes help remind us that we live in an interdependent world and that although people may have some cultural differences they feel the same joy and pain that we do. It helps us to see and hopefully learn from the mistakes of the past. It reminds us that we have a duty greater beyond just delivering the cheapest and most efficient machine. We should always keep the human aspect of our creations foremost in our minds and guide our behavior accordingly.

3. Relate what you have learned in general education classes to seeing beyond the engineering solution in problem solving and innovation. What are some other dimensions to consider and what impact do they have in an economic, global or societal context?

The General Education classes I have taken helped me to relate to humanity in general. I count myself as very fortunate to have been able to travel and live overseas and experience different cultures. I lived in the French part of Belgium for three years and South Korea for two years. I took Korean and French language classes to help give me a deeper understanding of the culture and people. I also took classes in US history, economics, and journalism. General Education classes have helped me understand how we have gotten where we are culturally, socially, and as a species. It has helped me to understand the economic and environmental interdependence of the nations of the world. Most importantly it has helped me understand that despite cultural differences people are pretty much the same everywhere you go. The General Education requirements force us to learn and think about the people around us both near and far. It puts some weight behind the meaning of ethics and makes them more than just hollow words. It should make us consider carefully the social implications of our work and realize that we have a personal responsibility for the impact it has no matter how far removed that may be from our work environment.