

My general education courses throughout my academic career have helped me to see beyond the technical aspects of problem solving and look towards the economic and societal impacts of my work as well. They have served me well to teach me different ways of approaching problems, leading me to try and find creative and beneficial solutions. While many of the problems I will deal with in engineering are technical, having a wide range of knowledge and experiences to pull from allows me to better solve the problem. Not only that, but it may allow me to identify or better define the problem as well. The biggest implication of this I think is communication and asking questions. In technical coursework, often times the task ahead is clearly defined, and you know exactly what it is that is supposed to be accomplished. However, it is often times that in a real scenario it is not so clearly defined. My general education courses have taught me to look at the bigger picture, identify areas of concern or disconnect that could lead to errors, and to ask clarifying questions to ensure that the goal I am trying to accomplish is what is being asked of me.

I think the course that inspired me the most to think this way was Introduction to Philosophy, or Phil 2010. While I found the course to be very interesting on its own, it also exposed me to many ways of thinking. I learned that there are often many different solutions to the same problem, and that often there is not an obvious correct one. It is in those instances that I use my understanding from my general education courses that I compare my solutions and their potential trade-offs amongst one another. It is with these types of skills that I feel prepared to enter a workplace and be able to use my expertise to help provide solutions that go beyond just technical, but practical as well.

Practical solutions can be defined in many ways, whether that be accessibility, ease of implementation, or many other factors, but I think the one that most people and employers use would be cost. In many scenarios, the cheapest solution that provides an acceptable result will be the option that most people opt to use. I believe that this is where my knowledge from Principles of Microeconomics (Econ 101) will be very beneficial. This course taught me how to look at the cost of an operation or solution, analyze its benefits, and determine if it is worth the price. There are many occasions where the cheapest solution won't achieve the desired quality, and the most expensive one would put the product or service out of the target cost. It is in these situations that I would use the skills I learned in this class to use and determine the best solution for my given situation.