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General Education Reflection

General education courses are an important aspect of any engineering curriculum. It's important to open the minds of engineers to think about more than just the immediate problem at hand. I enjoyed my general education courses because they allowed me to learn about how people think and to learn about the wide variety of cultures and personalities around the world. As a whole, the general education component helped formed my career goals and apply new thinking to engineering.

My short and long term goals regarding a career are pretty open. However, the ideal course for me to follow would have to be finding a software engineering job which allows for creativity, flexibility, and some possibilities regarding travel. After a few years in the industry, I would like to move towards managerial positions within a company that would allow me to work with a team to help accomplish goals on a project or several projects. I believe the general education component has prepared me for many of these goals.

Several of my general education electives were Spanish, which opened my mind to foreign culture, a new language, and a new way of thinking. Studying abroad was also an eye-opening experience. Being able to live in a completely different culture with new surroundings and people for 2 months really changed the way I think about the world. After returning to Iowa State, I was able to relate my Spanish course back to the experiences I had while studying abroad.

Relating all this to engineering is not difficult because engineering problems require several levels of expertise and collaboration with people from different cultural backgrounds. Even if someone's cultural background isn't vastly different from mine, it's easier now to understand why and how a teammate might go about a solution, even if it's not the way I would have done it. One of the key concepts to teamwork is communication, and this is something that travelers, like myself, will become inherently good at. Several times while being abroad, I communicated with people who spoke very little

English or none at all, so it took patience and understanding to be able to communicate an idea or ask a question.

Overall, general education courses helped me develop interpersonal and other non-technical skills. This skillset is used daily, especially in the field of engineering. Whether it be working with a team or the client, being able to communicate effectively is absolutely necessary, and this is one thing the general education component has done for me.