

2025 GE Senior Student Survey

In Spring 2025, the GE Committee, in collaboration with the WSCA, administered the GE Senior Survey. The survey questions were revised by the GE Committee, while WSCA officers promoted the survey and encouraged their peers to participate. Students who completed the survey were given the opportunity to enter a raffle for one of five \$15 Amazon gift cards. A total of 143 senior students participated in the survey, representing a 39% response rate; of these, 107 completed all survey questions.

Demographics

Among the respondents, 22% identified as male, 77% as female, and 1% declined to state their gender. For comparison, 63% female students graduated in May 2025.

The chart below displays the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the survey participants.

RACE/ETHNICITY	SURVEY	TOTAL GRADS
White	59%	53%
Hispanic/Latino	17%	22%
Asian	9%	7%
Two or More Races	9%	7%
Black or African American	2%	3%
Unknown	1%	6%
Non-Resident Alien	1%	3%
American/Alaskan Native	1%	0.3%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	1%	-

Figure 1. Survey participants' racial and ethnic background data.

Students from all academic departments and programs participated in the survey as presented in Chart 2.

Major	##	Survey%%	Total Grads %
Kinesiology	21	13%	10%
Economics & Business	17	10%	17%
Psychology	15	9%	10%

Biology	12	7%	6%
Political Science	11	7%	5%
History	8	5%	3%
Communication Studies	7	4%	6%
English	7	4%	4%
Liberal Studies	7	4%	3%
Data Analytics	6	4%	2%
Spanish	6	4%	1%
Nursing	5	3%	4%
Religious Studies	5	3%	3%
Sociology	5	3%	4%
Chemistry	4	2%	5%
Environmental Studies	4	2%	1%
Mathematics	4	2%	3%
Art	3	2%	3%
Education*	3	2%	-
Engineering	3	2%	3%
Philosophy	3	2%	2%
Computer Science	2	1%	2%
Music	2	1%	2%
Social Science	2	1%	1%
Biochemistry	1	1%	-
Theatre Arts	1	1%	1%

*Responses indicating "Teaching Credential" were counted as Education majors.

Figure 2.

If we look at divisional representation, it would appear that the Natural and Behavioral Sciences were overrepresented, while humanities were fairly represented in the survey.

Characteristics	Survey Percentage	Class percentage
Humanities	21%	21%
Social Sciences*	35%	33%
NBS	48%	44%
Transfer students	11%	16.9%

*Environmental Studies was classified as part of the Social Science division

Figure 3.

Based on the major and divisional representation, it is possible to conclude that the responding sample reasonably represents the graduating class as a whole.

Notable Findings

The survey did not gauge students' overall satisfaction in the GE; it was geared toward identifying specific strengths and weaknesses.

The survey results indicate that 90.2% of respondents would select a liberal arts college if given the opportunity to attend college again. While many students appreciated their liberal arts education for providing “a well-rounded understanding of different disciplines and how they connect,” several noted that some General Education (GE) courses were repetitive and that many GE requirements felt “not related to [their] major.” Nonetheless, when asked whether GE courses prepared them well for their major studies, the majority of students responded positively (see Fig. 4).

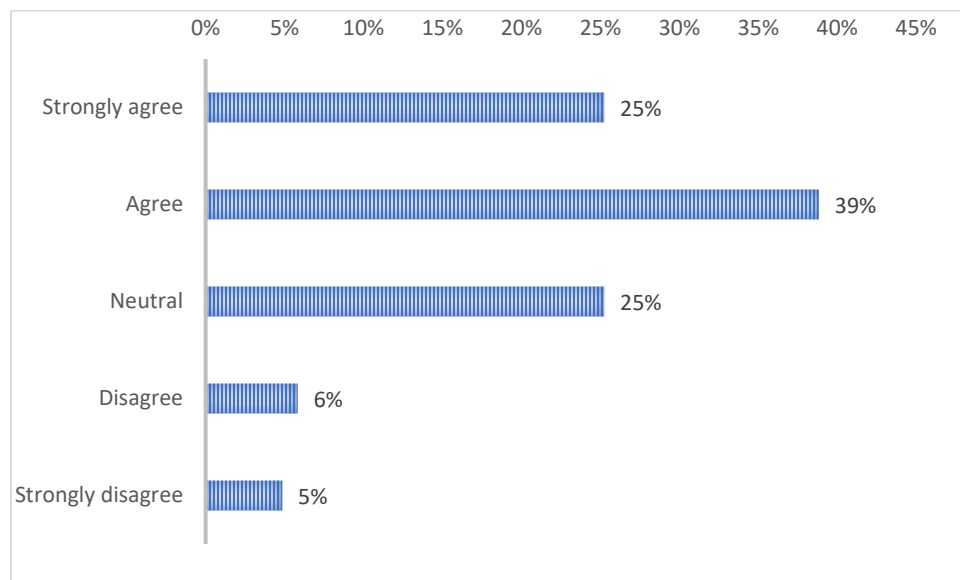


Fig. 4. Student responses to the questions, “In our catalog, we say that the skills and competencies you acquire in the General Education program will support your major studies. Was that your experience?”

When asked whether they would choose a Christian liberal arts college again, 22.4% of respondents answered “no.” Whites constitute 66% of students who would not choose a Christian Liberal Arts College, Hispanics – 19%, Asians – 13% and African-Americans – 3%; female students represent 84% in this category. 22% of these students graduated from the Department of Political Studies, and 8% each from the following departments, Biology, Chemistry and Sociology. While some expressed appreciation for the opportunity to study in a faith-centered environment, others felt that the Christian dimension of Westmont’s education could be more inclusive. Some respondents also noted that the college would benefit from engaging more openly with diverse perspectives to better reflect the complexities of our world. It is worth noting that many of these respondents did not have the opportunity to take the JRD courses, as they were not required by the time they enrolled at Westmont.

In response to the question, “Are there any General Education areas that should be added?” 52% of respondents answered “no.” Among the few suggested additions, the most frequently mentioned was an Ethnic Studies/Diversity area—unsurprising given that most seniors graduated without completing the JRD requirement, which only took effect in Fall 2024.

A majority of respondents expressed a desire for fewer GE requirements, but students do not agree on which ones to cut. The most common suggestions for which courses to cut are the four (4) Physical Education (PE) requirements for all students or exempting varsity athletes from completing them. Fifteen percent of respondents indicated that they do not consider the PE requirement essential (see Fig. 5). These findings align with the results of the 2023 Student PE Survey.

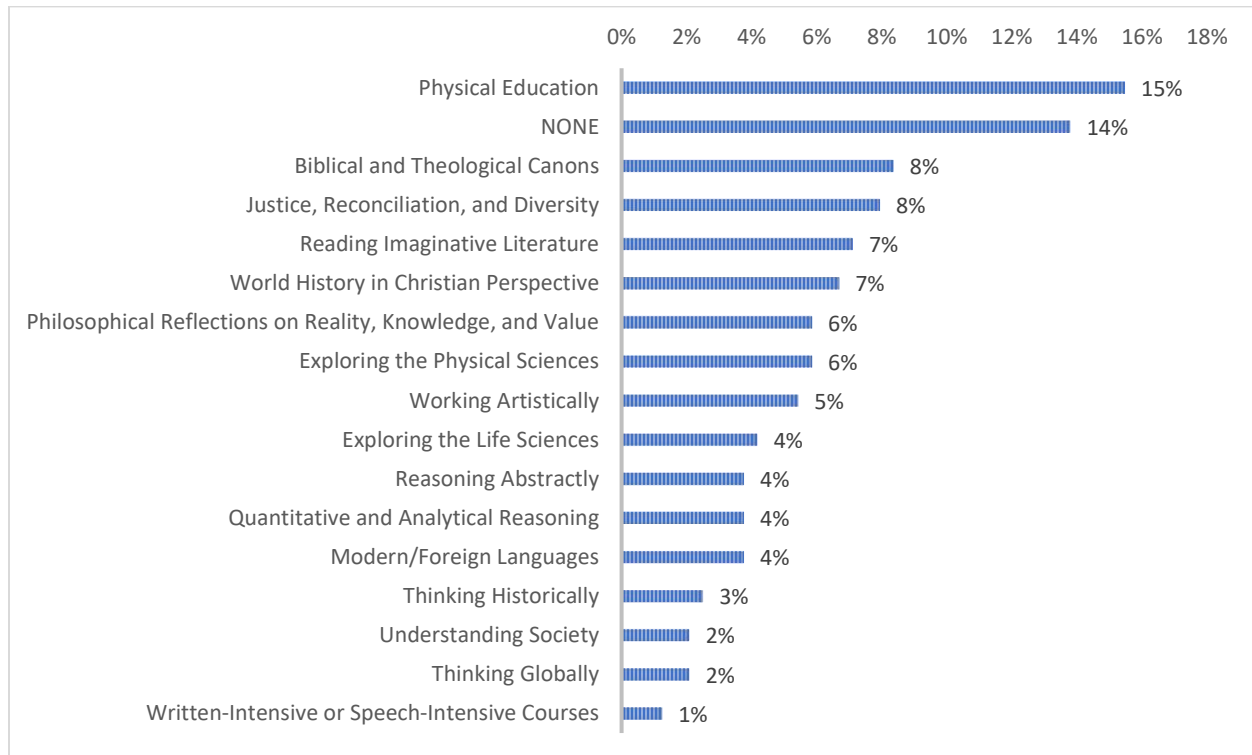


Fig. 5. Student responses to the question “Are there any General Education areas that should be dropped?”

Fitness for Life and other PE courses were also more often cited in response to the question, “Which GE required courses, if any, stand out in your mind as not worth your time? Why?” Representative comments include:

- *“Fitness for Life. I felt like I was doing a lot of busy work, and having the run as our test seemed like an inadequate assessment of health. I think it would have been more helpful to just incorporate some of this material into the other PE courses that involve actual exercise.”*
- *“Fitness for Life — this felt like a repeat of high school health class and covered common health knowledge.”*
- *“PE — most westmont [sic.] students are active anyway.”*

Additionally, “Fitness for Life” was volunteered about one-eighth of the time in response to the question, “Were there any GE courses too easy for college-level? Please be as specific as possible.”

Nevertheless, only around one in seven respondents suggested the PE area for elimination. The next most commonly cited areas were only suggested by one in twelve. While the average senior wants a smaller GE, there is no clear direction on which requirements to reduce.

Because the college decoupled Writing- and Speech-Intensive courses to create two distinct GE areas—Written Communication and Oral Communication—and because the Oral Communication ILO assessment is scheduled for the 2025–26 academic year, the GE Committee included questions related to this core competency. 96% of respondents reported feeling confident in their oral communication skills. Students identified a wide range of experiences that contributed to their development in this area, including in-class presentations, discussions, acting, and leadership opportunities. According to the survey, courses that support the development of oral presentation skills are distributed broadly across both the GE curriculum and major programs. Additionally, 84% of respondents indicated that they received feedback on their oral communication skills from professors, coaches, internship supervisors, and mentors.

A majority of students also felt that their writing-intensive courses prepared them well for academic and professional writing. Specifically, 31% reported that these courses equipped them to write “extremely well” and 42% said “well,” which is commendable (Fig. 4).

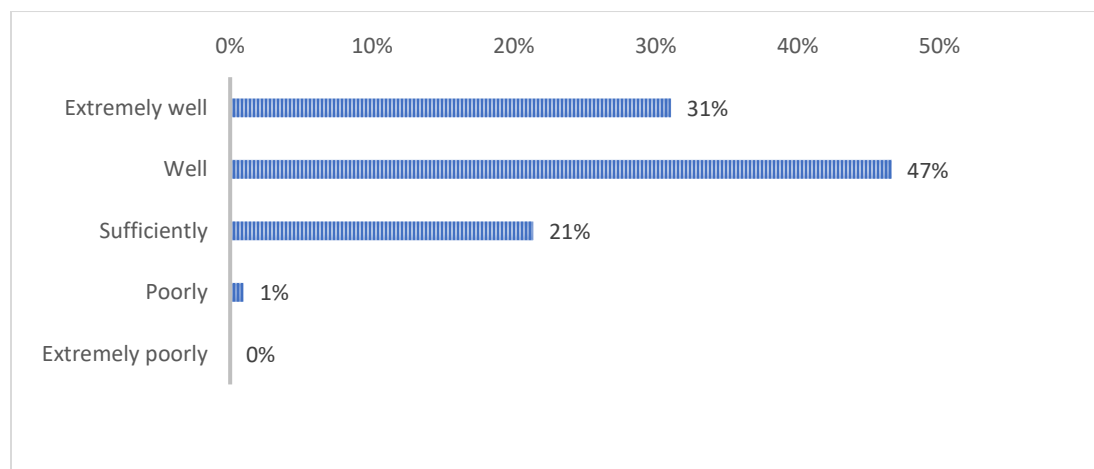


Figure 4. Student responses to the questions, “Have the writing-intensive courses equipped you with the ability to write well?”

In response to the question, “Were there any GE courses too easy for college-level?”, twenty-two percent of respondents reported that some General Education courses were too easy, with Fitness for Life, PE, English, and English Composition mentioned more frequently than other courses.

Among the required courses that students most frequently deemed not worth their time, Fitness for Life, PE courses, and RS courses were mentioned more often than other GE courses. Several respondents noted that Fitness for Life felt like a high school health class, citing its “unhelpful” content. Overall, many respondents expressed a desire for fewer required GE courses.

Among the “unreasonably difficult” courses, Common Context courses—Old Testament, New Testament, Doctrine, World History, and Philosophical Reflections—were mentioned more frequently than those in other GE areas. Many respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the time commitment required to engage meaningfully with the material, the volume of content they were expected to retain, inconsistencies across course sections taught by different professors, and the difficulty of exams and assessments. However, some students acknowledged that, despite the rigor, they learned a great deal from these courses.

Religious Studies (RS) GE courses prompted a wide range of responses. While some students reported strongly positive experiences, others were highly critical. These courses were frequently cited as among the most difficult GE offerings—particularly those perceived as tailored primarily for RS majors—yet they were also mentioned among students’ favorite courses outside their major. This mix of perspectives suggests that RS courses merit further discussion.

More broadly, the concern that GE courses—especially those in the Common Context area—are excessively time-consuming emerged as a recurring theme. A campus-wide discussion about student and faculty expectations for both GE and major courses at Westmont might be a timely and constructive step forward.

The question, “Which GE required courses, if any, stand out in your mind as particularly valuable? What was good about them?” elicited many insightful responses. Religious Studies (RS) GE courses were most frequently mentioned as particularly meaningful. Students noted that these courses helped them deepen or strengthen their faith, provided new perspectives on Christianity, and fostered a closer relationship with God.

World History and Philosophical Reflections were also frequently cited as valuable. Students credited these courses with helping them “develop a well-balanced view of the world” and encouraging them to “think about modern issues and the best way to respond to them.” Several respondents emphasized that their liberal arts education would not have felt complete without these classes.

Thinking Globally courses were considered especially valuable for encouraging a broader perspective—an important contribution “at a school that can tend to become insular culturally and socioeconomically.” Similarly, Understanding Society courses were described as “formative and crucial” for expanding students’ worldviews and educating them on racial, political, and gender differences.

Interestingly, Justice, Reconciliation, and Diversity (JRD) courses—despite being a recent addition to the GE curriculum—were highlighted as especially valuable, even though some students expressed criticism about their inclusion in the program. As mentioned earlier, not all seniors had the opportunity to take a JRD course before graduating, but those who did often spoke highly of the experience. One student explained that such courses are important because “the majority of students at Westmont lack an understanding of the lives of those who do not possess the same privilege as their own, as well as an understanding of how they possess their own privilege.” Another respondent appreciated witnessing their “more sheltered friends learn about systemic issues and think about them,” describing the experience as “great.” Yet another

student noted that “Westmont students desperately need the justice and reconciliation class” to prepare them “for a world that is not primarily white.” These results are consistent with the Spring 2025 JRD Student Survey results.

In response to the question, “What changes would you suggest to improve the General Education program at Westmont?”, a common desire was for a simpler, smaller, and more flexible GE. Notable qualitative responses included

- fewer GE requirements (with varying suggestions),
- a more flexible GE,
- less demanding or time-consuming courses,
- more consistent levels of difficulty among inquiries, courses, or sections,
- more basic (less pre-major) content,
- fewer or no PE courses.

As one student remarked, “By allowing students to follow their interests, they will take away more than the bare minimum from their classes.”

The GE Committee discussed the survey results at the committee meetings, received input from two academic departments and presented the survey findings at the October 2 Faculty Forum. The following committee’s observations and recommendations were shared with the Faculty Forum participants:

- Survey respondents varied in their suggestions of what to cut or reduce, and how to simplify. The most common suggestions were PE/Fitness for Life and, less often, Common Contexts courses.
- Gaps characterize student awareness, understanding, and agreement re the GE’s goals and function in a CLA education.
- Many students approach general education as a list of items to check off or reduce, rather than as the formation its designers intended.
- *Recommendation:* Faculty may benefit from a refresher on the GE’s goals, mission, and structure. We suggest using the GE’s mission statement and “What Do We Want for Our Graduates?”
- *Recommendation:* We should improve our sense of what to learn from students and teachers in subsequent program review.

Following the presentation, the GE Committee initiated semi-structured faculty roundtable discussions and collected notes from each group. The discussion summaries suggested the following next steps:

- Educate faculty on the GE’s mission and structure, especially new faculty at the end of their first year before getting first advisees;

- Add /integrate the GE in the Admissions web pages, and help advisors and admissions educate students and prospective students.
- Evaluate the impact of GE requirements on transfer students.
- Encourage students to take written communication courses earlier.
- Pay attention to our growing population of non-Christian students especially regarding Common Contexts RS courses.
- Advocate for a committee member to be invited into Wayfinding, especially at the end of first year or beginning of the second.
- Consider paired courses that combine GE areas.

Even though several discussion groups acknowledged students' concerns and suggestions for improvement, the proposed actions did not directly address students' requests for a simpler, smaller, and more flexible GE program. Broader campus-wide conversations about the GE program should be initiated by the GE Committee or the Academic Senate.