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General Education Reflection
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Waste of Time:
A Student Insight Into Becoming A Well-Rounded Engineer

I could not possibly count the number of times a peer of mine would casually mention in passing: "I'm just taking this class because it's easy and I need it to graduate." Per our accreditation standards, we need a "a broad education component that complements the technical content of the curriculum and is consistent with the program educational objectives." I think many engineering students underestimate the importance of broad education components and the role they play in our education. They view them as just an easy class to coast through and another criteria to meet to graduate. I could not disagree more with this ideology. While the technical education and courses an engineer takes are crucial, in the words of Vladimir Nabokov - "there is no science without fancy and art without fact." What makes a well rounded, phenomenal engineer is an inquisitive mind that learns about more than just math and physics, but art, history, psychology, and many other fields.

Throughout my time at Iowa State, I've been fortunate enough to pursue a wide range of general education courses to complement my degree. My first general education course was taken at my local community college and transferred to Iowa State, but it still proved to be a beneficial experience. General education courses help prepare you for the future and this class was no exception. It was an introductory course in Criminal Justice and the United States of America's justice system. It was taught by a former police officer and mayor of my hometown. He was vastly insightful and from his time on the force was able to present ideas on how to better the community with projects and initiatives, instead of arrests.

This class inspired a love of politics, governing systems, and other passions that have followed me throughout my career at Iowa State. After I started at Iowa State, this criminal justice course encouraged me to continue my education in political science, sociology, and other related soft sciences. I eagerly took several general education courses pertaining to political science including an introductory course on the United States government, a class on comparing political systems of countries around the world, a course evaluating and dissecting the relationship between our law and politics, and a class that dived deeper into the role of state and local governments in the United States. I branched out slightly to take a sociology course on social problems and American values that pertained to concerns like homelessness, substance abuse, and crime rates. This course also touched on how our political system addresses these issues and general population concerns.

Overall, I've been fortunate enough to take general education courses at Iowa State that have encouraged me to pursue my passions outside of engineering. I have been inspired to remain active in local politics as I graduate and move onto an engineering career thanks to a positive experience I had in my general education courses. While I learned a lot of valuable skills and knowledge from my general education courses, I think the biggest takeaway I discovered is that these courses are not only designed to help you become a more developed individual - but they are there to help you grow your passions and prepare you for the future. I think many engineers lose sight of or miss out on a chance to discover a passion because they underestimate the power and importance of general education courses.