Student Opinions on the General Education Sequence

During a student's freshman and sophomore years at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, general education course requirements fill their schedules. The general education sequence has goals that contradict itself by stating it hopes to widen students' perspectives and have them explore various courses (goal 2) while also noting that the sequence will help you prepare for your future major by homing in on a specific topic (goal 4). I aimed to understand students' perspectives on these courses and whether the goals are achieved in productive ways or if the requirement was distracting them from furthering their career studies. Through the research process, I interviewed various first-year students, outside informants and consulted academic literature to create an informed consensus on student feelings towards the requirements supporting career specialization and declaring a major. My experience inspired this project as general education courses provided little clarity on deciding my future major and career path. After focusing on the user-centric problem definition factor of improvement science, I discovered four different narratives for a freshman students at UNC, constructed by an individual's clarity with a future career and their viewpoint towards general education course. Variation is driven by the background influences in a student's academic life. To further analysis of this topic, I suggest surveying the entire freshman class. The university administration and faculty should revise these statistics and talk to students to better understand their perspectives on the general education sequence before adjusting the program.