

## **UC Merced**

### **AIARU: Panel 3 - General Education and the Research University**

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Symposium**

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**Panel #3: General Education and the Research University**

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ROBERT OCHSNER**

For the sake of time, I'm going to just emphasize one point and that is, how general education is delivered. And I'll do that through an anecdote, it goes back to what Christopher Viney was describing as the form of education that embeds general education in England. My, the summer of my freshman year--this is the anecdote--I decided I wanted to spend a year in England and it wasn't at Cambridge or Oxford, it was second tier but nevertheless, I studied under a single professor for that year in history. There was one other person with me. I spent most of the time focusing on one year of the Elizabethan period, 1598, and my area of special study was the rural, pastoral, social, and economic problems near London, the rural areas around London. And I was looking at facsimiles of historical documents from the, from the parishes. I learned to do history there. I came back as a sophomore; I had to complete the general education courses at the state school I was at. They looked at my transcript and they said I had to do a history course. [*laughing*] The history course I had to take was from Akhenaten, the pharaoh in Egypt, to Charlemagne, a couple thousand years worth of history or more compressed into one

quarter. I took my first quiz. On that quiz, there were three short response questions and about thirty multiple choice questions. I spent the entire hour answering the first question because I'd been trained to do that, been trained to think in a historical way. I had learned to do history and it completely discouraged me. In that context, as we look at general education, we need to think about forms of delivery of knowledge, which is what the lecturer approach which is the foundation for American education typically excels at. It's very efficient in an economic sense but I'm not sure how good it is in terms of pedagogical outcomes. On the other hand, you have a kind of tutorial model which is very intensive, it's very rich, it really gets back to what Professor [Kathleen] Hull was talking about, the value of research and, and learning how to do research. I certainly endorse that idea but there is a tension between the two, I think [Engineering] Dean [Jeff] Wright had addressed that point as well. That's the end of my anecdote. [*applause*]