Education Subcommittee

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The Freshman Experience

- Freshman curriculum largely “common”, but not truly a “core” curriculum
- Three departments have enrollment limits (Aero, Mechanical, Chem/Bio)
  - Infrastructure and faculty constraints
- Those denied enrollment in major of choice become “Open Options”, along with others who chose “Open Options” as first choice
- After freshman year, many strong performing “Open Options” students are unable to transfer into the major of their choice
- The emerging problem:
  - De-motivated or dissatisfied students
  - Potential retention issues
  - Next order effects on other programs in the college
A Potential Alternative

- All Freshman enroll as “Open-Options” (undeclared major)
  - Core curriculum – basic math/science, engineering applications, humanities
  - Choose major at end of Freshman year
    - Better informed students can make better choices
    - Track record of performance allows college to know students better

- Other highly rated institutions do this already
  - Purdue, Michigan, Washington, MIT, Stanford, Cornell, School of Mines

- Barriers /issues
  - Lack of broad recognition of this as an issue
  - Varying philosophies about the goals for the Freshman experience
  - Institutional inertia and silos
Recommendations

- **Near Term:**
  - Deans, Department Heads should recognize this as an issue to be addressed.
  - Review current data, and gather more (impact on students).
  - Consider transfer students (e.g. Mesa program).
  - Review other models – engage with other schools to understand what they do.
  - Success and philosophy of ITL – build on this.

- **Longer Term:**
  - How to create more flexibility to address changing demand for majors.
  - Facility and infrastructure flexibility/utilization.
  - Teaching/research tensions and tradeoffs.
  - Reward structure.