

“WHAT DO I GET OUT OF IT?”: CHARACTERISING STUDENTS’ MAIN TAKEAWAYS FROM A PHYSICS CLASS FOR NON-STEM STUDENTS

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KEYWORDS: Science Literacy, Socioscientific Issues, Contextualization

For science students, physics classes offer students the physics knowledge they will need for their future science careers. What benefit, therefore, do non-science majors get from taking general education physics courses? In the study we are presenting, we investigated what non-science students find the most valuable from a general education physics class. We evaluated students’ responses to a quiz question asking them to articulate the two most important, interesting, or valuable things they learned from the course. We created a coding scheme to place these takeaways into the following categories: Scientific Content, Scientific Epistemology, Societal Applications, Underrepresentation in Science, Science Attitudes, and Pedagogy and Learning. We investigated how students’ relationships with science (such as through their majors or self-reported attitudes towards science), course performance, and demographic information relate to the types of takeaways they report.

Preliminary results show that Scientific Content is the most common type of takeaway that students report across two semesters, with slightly more reporting of Scientific Content takeaways during a fully remote semester of instruction. However, in both semesters, over half of all student takeaways fell into categories other than Scientific Content. This result suggests that there are a variety of ideas from this course that may strongly affect non-science students, not just ideas relating to physical principles.

Proceedings of the IUPAP International Conference on Physics Education, ICPE 2022 5-9 December 2022, page 120, ISBN: 978-1-74210-532-1.