

**General Education Curriculum Committee  
Meeting of April 8, 2011, 2:30 p.m.**

**Minutes**

*Attending (Voting):* Brandt, French, Futrell, Koerselman, Mansfield-Jones, Maron, Martin, Masolo, Menezes, Singleton, Weinberg, Zimmerman. *(Non-Voting):* Bays, Billingsley, Carden, Dietrich, Karega-Mason. *(Guest):* Rabin (alternate representing the A&S Curriculum Committee).

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes of February 25, 2011, were approved.

**Cycle II Assessment**

Karega-Mason reported that she and Katie Hunt and the CEHD team (Ann Larson and Sherri Brown) will meet during the summer to generate a report of the Composition assessment results. The third readings for the written communication courses are under way, and the process is being reviewed. Also, the History and Humanities documents have been collected in preparation for the Cycle II assessment in the fall. The assessment training is scheduled on September 9 and the reading date is September 17.

**Cycle I Assessment Results**

Karega-Mason shared a draft report of the Cycle I General Education Program Assessment Results: 2005-2010 (see appendix) and asked the GECC for editorial feedback. Discussion led to the following recommendations regarding the framing of the document:

- Add Section 3.3.1 of the SACS accreditation standards.
- Outline the general education objectives to provide a snapshot of how the students are performing in each of the competency areas of the general education program. Send the base-line data results to the departmental deans and chairs for review and follow up with their faculties, posing the questions (especially #2 and #3) that are listed under “future plans” in the interest of continuing general education program improvements. Question #1 frames the thinking of the GECC for further discussion within the departments. For example, a score of 2.3 in the scale of 4.0 implies that improvement can be made. The approach can be analytical vs. prescriptive regarding the noticeably lower scores, looking at the General Education Program cumulative results vs. implicating departments or specific courses. For example, reviewing the scores of a particular course may indicate a large percentage of freshman students. Since departments are asking for numbers, the GECC can work with any faculty member who expresses an interest in possible changes in process.
- Reference the rubrics.

\*Action: Karega-Mason will circulate a revision of the report to the GECC and give a response deadline prior to distribution to the undergraduate deans and department chairs.

### **Update on Rubrics**

During the February readings, some issues arose that led to further examination of the rubrics. The Assessment Subcommittee will meet during the summer and work with the CEHD team to make recommendations. Dietrich, Martin and Bays volunteered to serve.

### **Syllabi Review Template**

The Syllabi Review Subcommittee is scheduled to meet on April 18 to discuss a conceptual framework for the syllabi review readings and establish a checklist template; Shumake will be involved in the process. Also, Gilchrist has been consulted about the Blue eXplorance software to be used for the syllabi review project.

\*Action: As a pro-active step, Koerselman recommended sending the checklist template to the chairs to alert them to what the GECC will be looking for in the syllabi. Timing is important.

### **SACS Visit Update**

Billingsley reported that the SACS accreditation review is a campus-wide discussion item and that the update is unfolding into a thorough review, including a review of the effect of SLOs on the general education program. The five-year update will be submitted in March 2013; the last visit was in 2007.

### **CD Petition Subcommittee**

Karega-Mason reported on the flow of petitions, which has increased toward the end of the semester. The subcommittee will meet on April 15 to review additional petitions. To date, two have been approved. Discussion on the reasons for rejection of petitions followed, including a lack of connection that students are making with life experience and the qualifying criteria; despite the posting of the guidelines and rubric, essays are not articulating critical engagement. One appeal is permitted.

Billingsley commented that a small test case may reveal that students don't clearly understand what the general education requirements are or do in terms of a coherent program.

### **i2a Template/Critical Thinking in General Education Courses**

Discussion arose in response to a draft i2a unit-reporting template that was circulated in preparation for the upcoming SACS accreditation. This template reflected critical thinking as part of the SLOs in the general education courses. Two major questions related to general education were posed by Bays:

- Is critical thinking an expected student learning outcome (SLO) for all approved general education courses in addition to the other specified learning outcomes (content areas such as written communication and the cultural diversity competency area)?
- Who is responsible for reporting general education outcomes, the units or GECC?

The confusion arose with the overlap in the i2a template and the general education templates and assessment and monitoring initiatives. It was noted that academic program review in the majors is the parallel to the general education program assessments (two different models).

\*Action: Make faculty members aware of the three overarching general education learning competencies (three core areas stated in the preamble), including critical thinking as a foundation.

Prepared by Kathy Carden



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Academic Deans and Department Chairs

**FROM:** General Education Curriculum Committee

Dr. Herbert Koerselman, Chair

Joy Karega, Assessment Coordinator

**DATE:** April 28, 2011

**SUBJECT:** General Education Program Assessment Results (2005-2010)

Assessment of student learning outcomes is a national expectation in higher education, and the expectations are calls for increased accountability. Section 2.7.3 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' (SACS) accreditation standards requires in each undergraduate program the successful completion of a general education component that:

- 1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree,
- 2) ensures breadth of knowledge,
- 3) is based on a coherent rationale.

Section 3.5.1 of the SACS accreditation standards also requires that "The institution identifies college –level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies." Section 3.31 of the SACS accreditation standards requires that "The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of the results in each of the following areas: (1) educational programs, to include student learning outcomes, (2) administrative support services, (3) educational support services, (4) research within its educational mission, if appropriate, (5) community/public service within its educational mission, if appropriate."

Based on these standards, in 2005, the General Education Curriculum Committee (GECC) initiated a program to assess student performance in the competencies stated in the preamble of the general education plan: "The general education program at the University of Louisville fosters active learning by asking students to:

- 1) think critically,
- 2) communicate effectively,
- 3) and understand and appreciate cultural diversity.”

Focusing on these three competencies provided a more achievable goal for the initial assessment cycle as opposed to assessing seven different content areas (Arts and Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Oral Communication, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Written Communication, and Cultural Diversity), each with multiple outcomes. Moreover, the focus on the three general competencies aided the GECC in compiling baseline data and snapshots of the general education program as a whole. Furthermore, the three general competencies allowed the GECC to demonstrate for SACS its commitment to developing and implementing an effective assessment model for assessing learning outcomes that are listed prominently in the program description. In April 2007, the GECC’s efforts were heralded by the COC-SACS Report of the Reaffirmation Committee: “The direct measures of critical thinking are outstanding, particularly the rubric designed by faculty.”

All university departments offering General Education courses have completed assessment for the first cycle of the Assessment Project. This report summarizes the results for the first cycle, excluding departments with curriculum designs that were not readily assessable using the current assessment model (i.e., Economics, Geography and Geological Sciences).

**Critical Thinking Results:** From 2005-2008, 1093 student artifacts collected from general education courses across the University were assessed by a diverse range of faculty, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the critical thinking rubric developed by the Assessment Rubrics Subgroup. Out of a maximum score of 4, the average scores were 2.76 for demonstrating recognition of the problem or question, 2.65 for using reasoning, arguments, and evidence, 2.44 for drawing conclusions based on reasons, arguments, and evidence, and 2.39 for showing awareness of multiple points of view, when appropriate.

The 2007 assessment involved only general education courses in mathematics; the critical thinking rubric was revised for this assessment. Therefore, the results of this assessment were not analyzed and combined with the results for cycle one. A total of 211 student artifacts were assessed by a diverse range of faculty, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the critical thinking mathematics rubric developed by the Assessment Rubrics Subgroup. For three of the four competency measures (interpreting mathematical information, applying mathematical models to solve problems, and representing mathematical information), out of a maximum score of 4, average scores ranged from 3.08 to 3.18; the average score for drawing conclusions based on evaluation was 2.87.

The spring 2010 assessment involved only general education courses in the natural sciences; the critical thinking rubric was revised for this assessment. Therefore, the results of this assessment were not analyzed and combined with the results for cycle one. A total of 262 student artifacts were assessed by a diverse range of faculty, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the critical thinking natural sciences rubric developed by the Assessment Rubrics Subgroup. Out of a maximum score of 4, the average scores were 2.83 for demonstrating an understanding of methods of science, 2.79 for constructing scientific understanding of natural

phenomena, 2.83 for applying scientific principles to everyday and lab-based phenomena, and 2.92 for communicating an understanding of vocabulary, materials, and technique used.

**Effective Communication Results:** From 2005-2008, 864 student artifacts collected from general education courses across the University were assessed by a diverse range of faculty, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the effective communication rubric developed by the Assessment Rubrics Subgroup. Out of a maximum score of 4, the average scores were 2.87 for articulating purpose and employing tone consistent with purpose, 2.71 for clarity and coherent organization, 2.51 for demonstrating analysis or synthesis, and 2.83 for using appropriate conventions and style.

**Cultural Diversity Results:** From 2005-2008, 692 student artifacts collected from general education courses across the University were assessed by a diverse range of faculty, instructors, and doctoral graduate teaching assistants using the cultural diversity rubric developed by the Assessment Rubrics Subgroup. Out of a maximum score of 4, the average scores were 2.38 for recognizing that culture shapes behavior and attitudes, 2.22 for demonstrating ability to understand the relationship of culture to its environment and history, 2.04 for recognizing cultural groups as internally diverse, and 2.10 for bringing awareness of cultural diversity to the analysis of problems or issues.

**Future Plans:** The GECC is considering three primary questions, and hopes to engage the faculty in discussion of the following:

- 1) What do the cycle one assessment results tell us about the General Education Program and students' performance in the program with respect to the stated learning outcomes?
- 2) Based on these results, how can we improve the General Education Program and student performance in general education courses with respect to the stated learning outcomes?
- 3) How can we improve the General Education assessment process?