

General Education (GE) Outcomes Assessment

Excerpt from SACS Response

In the self-study document and during the SAC's visit college staff were very open about the fact that outcomes assessment in general education was in the early stages of being formalized. General education competencies and assessment measures were identified in the 2001 Academic Master Plan. The Curriculum Committee initially had responsibility for development and implementation of a GE Assessment Plan. The Institutional Effectiveness Council (IEC) evaluated the progress of implementation of this plan and recommended that a committee be formed that had representatives from both the IEC and the Curriculum Committee.

During the of fall 2002, this committee began revamping the assessment plan and implemented several components. The 2002-03 completed assessment chart follows:

Insert GE Assmt Chart ----

The GE Assessment Committee will annually develop a plan for assessment with specific selected competencies fully assessed and evaluated during that year. During 2002-03, reading, writing, math and critical thinking were selected for full evaluation. The Assessment chart includes all of the competencies and data gathered on each. During 2003-04 two general education competencies will be fully studied: math and diversity/multiculturalism/global interdependence (speech will be delayed until 2004-05). Math was identified again because of the inadequacy of the data collected during 2002-03. In addition, follow-up studies identified in the assessment chart will be undertaken.

The following highlights some of the recommendations that resulted from evaluation of general education assessment data:

- GE Committee recommends that Curriculum and Entry-Level Assessment Committees evaluate recommendation to require college-level reading skills as a pre-requisite for all college-level courses
- English faculty and the Curriculum Committee should develop guidelines for formal writing assignments and distribute these standards to other faculty at a workshop
- English 1301 should be a prerequisite for all classes in which writing is a significant component, and the prerequisite should be strictly enforced
- Do follow-up on students in developmental math to include the length of time it takes students to complete developmental sequences, subsequent success in higher-level math courses, retention and completion rates in developmental math
- In future critical thinking assignments students should be clearly informed of the critical thinking criterion (as listed in the general education competency statements) when the assignment is given.
- Redefine computer literacy competencies required for graduation and the methods for determining competencies have been met; specifically look at test used to test out because it does not test competencies fully – refer to Curriculum Committee
- Recommend that Curriculum Committee develop strategies to address ways to increase the use of technology and software application use in instruction
- Recommend that Technology Committee and BRC review history of funding of instructional computer technology and set goals for improvement of level of funding

Several recommendations were made for specific approach to assessment or for further study (see chart).

GE Assessment Committee Membership:

The Committee had five standing members this last year with one resigning in early September 2003. There are two faculty members, the Associate Vice President for General Education, the Executive Director for Institutional Advancement (resigned) and the Vice President for Student Services/Institutional Effectiveness (who replaced the Associate VP for IE/Planning in mid-spring 2003). Each year, additional faculty members will be added based on which competencies are targeted for that particular year. During 2003-04 two faculty members will be added from math. In addition, the chair and one extra member of the Multicultural Team as well as the individual responsible for developing global education initiatives will serve on the Committee.

Training for General Education Assessment Committee Members:

Several members attended conferences and workshops that addressed general education outcomes assessment prior to this year. During 2002-03 the following were attended:

- James Nichols, Inc. assessment workshop
- AAHE Assessment Forum
- AACNU – General Education Assessment of Student Learning
- Pacific Planning Assessment and IR put on by Consortium for Assessment and Planning Support
- TAIR Workshop on SAC's criteria related to assessment

The GE Assessment Committee has learned a great deal over the last two years of attempting to implement a meaningful plan that leads to improvement in the curriculum. Some of the changes/enhancements to the committee and its processes include:

- Addition of faculty to the Committee from the general education competency discipline being studied
- Work closely with the Curriculum Committee to refine and improve the general education competency statements
- Design of studies need to include specific strategies to identify discreet curriculum content that needs improvement. General information will only provide faculty with limited information for use in curriculum design.
- Form a General Education Advisory Committee made up of community members who can provide feedback on skills needed to meet the needs of local business and industry and that will ensure student success in transferring to four year colleges
- Hold half-day retreat for faculty to 1) identify future needs in general education assessment, 2) dialog about general education skills needed and 3) create understanding and buy-in by faculty of general education assessment.
- Meet with full faculty teams in discipline where general education competencies are being studied for that year to get feedback on the design for the year and to follow-up with findings to develop recommendations for improvement

- Present general education assessment overview, plan and findings at all adjunct orientations.
- Continue training workshops on general education assessment methods to include specific training on Bloom's Taxonomy of educational objectives: The classification of educational goals.