

UWSP General Education Program

Mission Statement: The General Education Program provides the framework of a liberal education, equipping students with the knowledge and skills to facilitate intellectual and personal growth, pursue their advanced studies, and improve the world in which they live.

At UWSP, we believe that a liberal education is essential to living in today's global society. We also believe that global citizenship must begin at home with individuals learning to see the world from perspectives other than their own. Some of these perspectives are cultural and develop from the study of other languages, ethnicities, and beliefs. Some perspectives come from honing new intellectual skills, by learning math and science, for example, or cultivating an understanding of the past and an appreciation of the arts and literature. And some perspectives are the products of unique experiences such as getting involved in a community or studying abroad.

Ultimately, the more students are encouraged to step outside their familiar habits and beliefs, the more they gain the wisdom to see connections between themselves and the world around them, the generosity to empathize with the differences they encounter, and the willingness to place their newfound abilities in the service of a larger community. In this way, a liberal education at UWSP prepares students to be responsible global citizens.

GEP Learning Outcomes

The General Education Program seeks to develop these qualities of global citizenship in four distinct ways. After completing the general education curriculum, students will be able to:

- Demonstrate critical thinking, quantitative, and communicative skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society.
- Demonstrate broad knowledge of the physical and social world as well as the methods by which this knowledge is produced.
- Recognize that conserving the world's resources demands personal responsibility, social equity, and environmental sustainability.
- Apply their knowledge and skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems.

Curriculum

Students will fulfill these outcomes by completing the following requirements of the General Education Program:

On November 19, 2008 the Faculty Senate approved the following step-by-step procedure for considering and approving a new General Education Program.

1) Articulate the mission of the General Education Program (GEP) at UWSP.

✓ Approved May 2008

2) Develop the explicit goals and program outcomes of the GEP.

3) Identify the GEP model (core, distribution, decentralized, etc.) including its relationship to degree types (BA, BS, BFA, BM).

4) Identify the structural components of the GEP and specify measurable learning outcomes for each.

5) Develop course criteria for the GEP.

6) Make recommendations regarding the administration of the GEP.

Explanation of GEPRC Proposal for Step 2: Develop the explicit goals and program outcomes of the General Education Program.

The first portion of the proposal is a narrative description of the goals we believe should guide our General Education Program (GEP). We opted for a narrative rather than a bulleted list in order to address one of the key failings of our current GDRs: namely, that students (and occasionally faculty) have no clear idea why UWSP requires the completion of a general education curriculum.

The proposed narrative is intended to provide this explanation in simple language with as little jargon as possible. It builds explicitly on Chancellor Bunnell's Vision 2015, which calls for "challenging learning and leadership experiences that prepare students to be GLOBAL CITIZENS." The term "global citizen" by itself has many possible definitions. Yet the committee sought to utilize the very capaciousness of the term in order to assert that a liberal education is, in fact, the best route toward becoming a responsible citizen of the world. The core value of encouraging students to view human society from other perspectives is both an apt description of a liberal education and, equally, one meaningful way of defining global citizenship.

In articulating specific program outcomes, the committee reviewed many examples from other campuses and institutions, including the "Essential Learning Outcomes" put forward by the

Association of American Colleges and Universities as part of its LEAP initiative and, more recently, the UW System's own "Shared Learning Goals." (Both documents are available on the GEPRC Web site: <https://committees.uwsp.edu/gedpolrev/default.aspx>, under "Shared Documents").

We defined four GEP Learning Outcomes, each meant to be specific enough to provide structure to the curriculum yet broad enough to offer some flexibility in later shaping the more particular course requirements and their associated learning outcomes. In other words, each Learning Outcome could be satisfied in numerous ways. We deliberately sought to avoid language that would point directly at specific courses, departments, or programs.

After completing the general education curriculum, students will be able to:

- **"Demonstrate critical thinking, quantitative, and communicative skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society."**

Explanation: Students receiving a liberal education need to develop specific skills such as critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, and communication. These kinds of skills are essential to succeeding in today's global society.

- **"Demonstrate broad knowledge of the physical and social world as well as the methods by which this knowledge is produced."**

Explanation: A liberal education should also contain specific knowledge components as well as exposure to various methods by which such knowledge is produced. Given our emphasis on global citizenship, this GEP Learning Outcome points specifically toward a comparative, multidisciplinary understanding of human society.

- **"Recognize that conserving the world's resources demands personal responsibility, social equity, and environmental sustainability."**

Explanation: Among UWSP's most important defining qualities is our commitment to the stewardship of natural resources. This is reflected both in the longstanding success of the CNR as well as more recently in Chancellor Bunnell's Vision 2015 and the newly approved university mission statement. Consequently, this GEP Learning Outcome points toward this issue, highlighting three specific aspects of effective stewardship: responsibility, equity, and sustainability.

- **"Apply their knowledge and skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems."**

Explanation: The committee felt strongly that a successful general education curriculum should include opportunities for students to apply the knowledge and skills they learn, and to do so in specifically interdisciplinary ways. By

“interdisciplinary,” we mean literally experiences that cross disciplinary boundaries. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways: interdisciplinary courses, required minors, or interdisciplinary certificates.

Please note that the terms “outcomes” and “objectives” are often used interchangeably in general education. However, the committee opted to use learning “outcomes” because this term refers to expected results that are directly assessable: in other words, they are subject to measurement by gathering evidence that students are meeting a particular standard.

In addition to the revised proposal, the committee has included two other documents for review by Academic Affairs and Faculty Senate: the revised proposal with markups and an appendix containing all the comments collected by GEPRC when the draft proposal was circulated to the campus. (Page numbers in the markups refer to the section of comments that follows.) Combined, we hope this material provides sufficient explanation for our rationale in revising the initial proposal.

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Ultimately, the more students are encouraged to step outside their familiar habits and beliefs, the more they gain the wisdom to see connections between themselves and the world around them, the generosity to empathize with the differences they encounter, and the willingness to place their newfound abilities in the service of a larger community. In this way, a liberal education at UWSP prepares students to be responsible global citizens.

GEP Learning Outcomes

The General Education Program seeks to develop these qualities of global citizenship in four distinct ways. After completing the general education curriculum, students will be able to:

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- Recognize that conserving the world's resources demands personal responsibility, social equity, and environmental sustainability.
- Apply their knowledge and skills, working in interdisciplinary ways to solve problems.

Curriculum

Students will fulfill these outcomes by completing the following requirements of the General Education Program:

Comment [GS1]: Several comments noted that the deleted phrase below read as if it were a definition of liberal education, and that as such, the phrase was inadequate. In fact, the phrase was never intended as a comprehensive definition of a liberal education. However, rather than clarifying the phrase, the committee opted simply to delete it. (See, for example, Lorri Nandrea's comment, p. 2.)

Deleted: —an education that equips students to recognize their talents and discover their potential—

Deleted: But

Comment [GS2]: Several comments requested the inclusion of specific reference to the study of the past, either in the Goals or the Program Outcomes. The committee opted to include a reference here. (See, for example, Lorri Nandrea's comment, p. 1.)

Comment [GS3]: Several people asked for specific reference to "critical thinking" rather than "analytical" skills. (See, for example, Dona Warren's comment, pp. 9-10.) Others asked for the inclusion of information literacy. However, the committee believes this might be included as a communicative skill.

Deleted: , and analytical

Comment [GS4]: Several people asked for a clearer reference to science in the Program Outcomes. (See, for example, Dona Warren's comment, p. 10.) Others asked for specific reference to history or the study of the past. However, this could be included as part of knowledge of the social world.

Deleted: world's peoples, cultures, and social institutions.

Comment [GS5]: Several people noted the importance of methodology in addition to simple knowledge in this Program Outcome. (See, for example, Lorri Nandrea's comment, p. 2.)

Comment [GS6]: This change is intended to remove the ambiguity in the original draft noted by Alice Keefe (pp. 8-9).

Deleted: the importance of

Deleted: in managing the world's resources

Comment [GS7]: Several comments noted the difficulty of providing truly interdisciplinary courses. However, the committee feels strongly that this Outcome should remain a goal of general education. (See, for example, Tom Rowe's comment, pp. 5-6.)

Below are three sets of comments received by GEPRC concerning our proposed Program Goals and Outcomes: 1) comments received by email; 2) comments posted to our Web site; and 3) minutes from the open forum held on December 9.

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I like this proposal very much. I would like to recommend one small change. In the first narrative paragraph, second sentence (“But global citizenship must begin at home with individuals learning to see the world from perspectives other than their own”), cut “But.” You could replace “But” with “In addition” or something like that: the current version suggests you are somehow discounting the point made in the previous sentence, when in fact you are adding to and clarifying it.

Take care,

Rob Harper (History)

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To the GEPR Committee,
I greatly appreciate the work that you have put into the important task of revising the General Education Program. Thank you for inviting feedback on the proposed goals and program outcomes. I wanted to share three concerns.

First, both the narrative and the list of outcomes seem to leave out two components stressed in the AAC&U definition of “liberal education”: history, and “ways of knowing.” College educators in many disciplines continually lament the fact that students do not know history, and that this lack of knowledge greatly impedes their understanding of the present. Perhaps the committee worried that mentioning the word “history” would seem protectionist of one particular discipline, though of course each discipline has a history and has some curriculum oriented toward understanding the relations between past and present. To avoid this concern, though, one could instead use the word “past” or the phrase, “past and present.” For example:

Some perspectives come from honing new intellectual skills, by learning math and science, for example, or cultivating *an understanding of the past and* an appreciation of the arts and literature.

Demonstrate broad knowledge of the world's *past and present* peoples, cultures, and social institutions.

Second, I see a difference between having skills, having knowledge, and having an understanding of the processes by which knowledge is produced in various fields. The draft seems to focus on the first two (skills and knowledge) and leave out the third ("ways of knowing"). In my view, though, the single most important reason for requiring an English major to take a science class is for that student to gain an understanding of the fundamental methodologies by which scientific knowledge is generated and tested. S/he may not come away from an introductory level course with a thorough understanding of star formation or plant biology. But s/he should be able to appreciate scientific forms of reasoning, and hence be a more informed consumer of scientific information. Your emphasis on acquiring new perspectives seems to point toward the importance of understanding ways of knowing. What does the world look like from the perspective of a physicist, as opposed to that of a philosopher, a sociologist, or an artist? What kinds of questions does each discipline ask, and how do professionals in each discipline arrive at answers? However, this important component does not find its way into the learning outcomes as presently formulated. In my view, this absence limits the richness and depth of the learning outcomes, and might ultimately limit the richness and depth of the courses offered to help students meet them.

Third, the definition of "liberal education" given in the first sentence of the narrative description ("a liberal education—an education that equips students to recognize their talents and discover their potential") translates only imperfectly the definition given in the recently approved mission statement ("equipping students with the knowledge and skills to facilitate intellectual and personal growth, pursue their advanced studies, and improve the world in which they live"). It also seems out of joint with the definition adopted by the UW System from the AAC&U ("Liberal education is a philosophy of education that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills, and a strong sense of values, ethics, and civic engagement"). The definition given in the narrative makes it sound as though liberal education is exclusively a matter of personal development and personal discovery. I think this is a less inspiring definition than either the one in the mission statement or the one from AAC&U. Also, it does not seem to match the remainder of your narrative, which emphasizes seeing the world from other perspectives and stepping outside the familiar, rather than cultivating what is already inside the self. I wondered if the committee considered simply using the AAC&U

definition, and then adding something like: At UWSP, we particularly emphasize the importance of preparing students to be global citizens... (and continue from there).

Thanks again for your time, and for considering these suggestions.

Best wishes,

Lorri Nandrea

Associate Professor of English

English Department, 424 CCC

University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point

Stevens Point, WI 54481

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Don,

I just wanted to let you know that I really liked the draft learning outcomes. I don't have any substantial edits.

Tim Ginnett

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Hi, Don,

I applaud your efforts on the GEP committee and the documents you and the committee have prepared to date. I'm sure this is a gargantuan task!

You have asked for input on the documents. I have read the ones that were distributed via MOD and just have two comments.

1) I noticed the lack of the term "critical thinking" in the documents. I do see places where critical thinking is implied, but "critical thinking" is a fundamental construct of higher education and I'm just wondering why this terminology was not used in the GEP documents. If it is just a matter of word choice, the committee may wish to consider including "critical thinking" in its description of the goals of the GEP courses. If it was purposely omitted because of the focus on assessable outcomes, is there some way to include the term "critical thinking" within the context of an assessable outcome, as its omission seems conspicuous?

2) While it is included in the preamble of the proposal, “science” is missing from the four statements of learning outcomes. The first outcome suggests scientific exposure, but I think this outcome would benefit and be clarified from inclusion of the term “science”.

Thanks for your consideration off the above and for all of your hard work on the GEP committee.

John P. Droske
Professor of Chemistry and Director, POLYED
National Information Center for Polymer Education
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point
Department of Chemistry, Rm D129
2001 Fourth Avenue
Stevens Point, WI 54481

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Dear Don and Greg,

I might not be able to make it to the meeting next week, but I have a few thoughts concerning the proposed goals and outcomes (“Explanation of Program Outcome Proposal” PDF).

- 1- With the exception of the third outcome (“Recognize, etc.”), the “Explanations” seem to be mostly rearranging the furniture and not really explaining the stated goal beyond the wording of the goal itself.
- 2- Is it too late to revise the language of the goals themselves? I’m thinking especially of #2, “Demonstrate broad knowledge of the world’s peoples, cultures, and social institutions”—could we consider adding “including our own”? “Know thyself” is one of the oldest pieces of advice for those wishing to know where to start along the journey toward knowledge, and it seems important to emphasize that students’ ability to appreciate other cultures depends to some degree on their awareness of their own.
- 3- On a practical level, I’m concerned about the statement, “We deliberately sought to avoid language that would point directly at specific courses, departments, or programs.” I understand the reasoning for this, but in the end somebody, eventually students, will need to choose specific courses housed in specific departments or programs. The idea of making specific course recommendations is unpleasant because there certainly will be “winners and losers” and there is bound to be much debate and

disagreement concerning which courses will “count.” But I think it would be healthy to be as explicit as we can about this now (perhaps in the “Explanation” sections) to identify which courses or departments or disciplines will be called upon to help achieve each particular outcome. The more we pass the buck of making these hard decisions to students who “have no clear idea why UWSP requires the completion of a general education curriculum,” the harder it will be to achieve our primary objective of revising the GDRs. Also, it will help people understand what we really mean by the various outcome statements. Perhaps in later stages of this process we will be looking more at the details of specific course requirements, but I think the more specific we can be now the better. If GDRs will ultimately come from a select few departments, we should know that up front; likewise, if we are trying to spread them out evenly through every department or college, we need to be explicit about that too. Right now it’s vague enough for everyone to be vacillating between excessive anxiety and excessive complacency about how these changes will affect their departments.

Thank you for considering these thoughts, and thank you for your work on this important committee.

M. Wade Mahon

English Department

University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point

Stevens Point, WI 54481

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Hi Greg

First, I would post this to the web site offered in the explanation document, but there is no link in the "upper right hand portion of the screen" and the little sign-in box does not accept me as an authorized person. Hence, this e-mail since its unlikely I will be at the public meeting.

The substantive comment involves the fourth bulleted point. To satisfy that point there will have to be courses designated as interdisciplinary, presumably because of content, or actually interdisciplinary in being courses taught by more than one academic area.

The former is either going to be met with new courses not currently on the books or it will be basically a fiction by saying a current course cuts across disciplinary lines. I would anticipate that most course so designated would be an academic fiction. The latter, forming new courses taught by faculty from multiple areas, seems to me to be largely impractical.

My basic suggestion is to drop that point. It seems an unnecessary complication without actually doing anything substantive because a truly substantive response is going to be too difficult to implement. Rather, if you want a real global perspective, then encourage growth in International programs and require some academic time spent out of the country. That's not going to be possible for most students because of expense, but it would more realistically satisfy the educational requirement you are aiming at.

In the end, the goals and objectives statement is well crafted, but I fear what will happen is when you start becoming course specific you will wind up packaging courses that merely touch on areas as opposed to actually satisfying your objectives if you leave that last point in.

Just one man's opinion...

Tom Rowe

Psychology

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Hi Greg and Don,

Like Tom Rowe, I also had problems figuring out how to leave feedback using the <https://committees.uwsp.edu/gedpolrev/outcomes/default.aspx> website.

Here's the Library faculty's collective response:

Both the UW System's "Shared Learning Goals for Baccalaureate Students" and LEAP's "Essential Learning Outcomes" acknowledge the relevance of information literacy. The former specifically mentions it as a component of "Effective Communication skills," and the latter subsumes it under "Intellectual and Practical Skills," assigning it the same high-level standing as "inquiry and analysis," "written and oral communication," and "quantitative literacy." Given the importance of information literacy in our global information-driven society, please consider giving it the prominence that it deserves by incorporating it into the GEP Learning Outcomes. This could be easily accomplished by inserting the term "information-literacy" (here hyphenated since it functions as an adjective, or unit modifier) into the first of the four GEP Learning Outcomes:

- Demonstrate quantitative, analytical, communicative and information-literacy skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society.

(We moved together "quantitative" and "analytical" since, as types of reasoning skills, they are closely related.)

The Library faculty appreciates your good work.

Axel

Axel Schmetzke, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Library  
University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point  
Tel.: 715-346-4658  
Email: [aschmetz@uwsp.edu](mailto:aschmetz@uwsp.edu)

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Thanks to the committee for their work on the current draft of the GEP learning outcomes.

I like very much the discussion with which you preface these outcomes. In this preface, the committee's rationale for selecting this model is connected to its view a liberal arts education should foster the capacity to see oneself and others from new perspectives,

and to gain empathy for and understanding of persons, ideas and cultures which are different from their own. This is a great pedagogical goal to emphasize. I would however like to see stronger lines of connection between the philosophy of liberal education expressed in this preface with the four specific learning outcomes you present.

The comments which follow are my own, but were developed in the context of a conversation with the entire Philosophy Department at our recent faculty meeting. I especially thank Dona Warren, James Sage and Karin Fry for their contributions to my thoughts about the GEP draft.


1. I am not confident that your preface provides adequate justification for the selection of these four specific program goals. I would have liked to see a rationale for departing from the traditional model of a tri-partite program in which some GEP requirements are divided between the physical sciences (including math), the social sciences and the humanities. Such a distributive model is at the foundation of UWSP's current Gen Ed program; students must take some courses in all three divisions of the liberal arts. I'd like to know the reasons why you decided to depart from this model. The four program outcomes you set forth do not clearly stipulate whether exposure to all three areas of the liberal arts will remain a program goal or not.
2. Program goal number 2 "demonstrate broad knowledge of the world's peoples, cultures and social institutions" needs to become more specific I believe. "Broad knowledge" is a very vague term, and further, stops short pedagogically at the stage of accumulating information. This outcome could be more closely linked to the philosophy of liberal education specified in your preface by linking the accumulation of knowledge to the exercise of critical thinking skills and the fostering of intellectual maturity. Such goals are suggested in several of the learning outcomes set forth in the UW System Liberal Arts Learning Outcomes: #3 "interpret and evaluate information from a variety of sources, #4 "make complex connections....," #7 demonstrate intellectual agility and the ability to manage change and ambiguity, and especially #9 "*acquire a deep understanding of one's self and respect for the complex identities of others, their histories and their cultures.*" This last goal (#9) most precisely gets at the reason why students need to gain a "broad knowledge" of the larger world. Its language about seeking knowledge *of self* and others, and seeking understanding of *the complexities of other worlds*, may also be helpful if you want to make your program goal number 2 more specific.

3. As the Philosophy department faculty discussed your third program goal, it became apparent that the language is ambiguous. Some of us read this outcome as referring to personal responsibility, social equity and environmental sustainability as three distinct goals. Others read the final clause “in managing the world’s resources” as qualifying not just environmental sustainability but also personal responsibility and social equity so that the entire outcome refers to issues of environmental sustainability and awareness. If the latter interpretation is correct, then we felt that the outcomes may be too heavily focused on environmentalism to the exclusion of other important educational goals relating to personal responsibility and civic engagement. Further, it might be helpful to specify *why* it is important to foster an ethic of responsibility and engagement. My suggestion for this third program outcome would be something along these lines: *“cultivate an ethics of personal, social and environmental responsibility with the aim of preparing students to actively participate as citizens of a multifaceted democracy and a globally connected society.”* This language has the extra benefit of connecting the challenges of citizenship within a pluralist democracy with the goal of fostering global citizenship.

4. The fourth program goal “apply their knowledge and skills” doesn’t clearly say how or why they should apply their knowledge and skills. I like better the language of goal #5 of the UW System Liberal Arts Learning outcomes: “Transform information into knowledge and knowledge into judgment and action”


Sincerely,
Alice Keefe
Professor of Religious Studies
Department of Philosophy

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| <span style="float: left;">replied 11/30/2020 12:42 PM</span> <span style="float: right;"><a href="#" style="color: white; text-decoration: none;">View Properties</a> <a href="#" style="color: white; text-decoration: none;">Reply</a></span> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <br><span style="color: blue;">Warren, Dona</span>                                                                                                            | <p>I think it's a terrific idea to lead our list of outcomes with the outcome category that mentions skills, and I like the skills that you mention.</p> <p>I would only suggest that "analytical skills" be replaced with "critical thinking skills," because</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1) Critical thinking skills include analytical skills, so the change wouldn't exclude anything while giving us a bit more flexibility later on.</li></ol> |

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|  | <p>2) Critical thinking carves out an established, cross-disciplinary field in a way that “analytical skills” doesn’t. There’s a world of literature about the teaching and learning of critical thinking upon which we can draw for professional development opportunities later on, if we want, and to which we can contribute both individually and collectively. Including the concept of critical thinking in our learning outcomes will make our participation in this important broader conversation more obvious to everyone.</p> <p>3) The term "critical thinking" has significant currency with important constituencies that "analytical skills" often lacks; the term “critical thinking” appears among LEAP’s essential learning outcomes, for instance.</p> |
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| <br>Warren, Dona | <p>Might the second outcome category read “Demonstrate broad knowledge of the physical and social world,” or, if we want to preserve much of the original language, could it read “Demonstrate broad knowledge of the physical and social world, including knowledge of the world’s peoples, cultures, and social institutions?”</p> <p>By including reference to the physical, as well as social world, we can allow the natural sciences to fit here in a way that preserves knowledge of the natural world as an intrinsic good. (Placing natural science in the third category risks giving the impression that understanding the way the world works is only important insofar as it enables us to act responsibly toward the world.)</p> |
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|  | <p>A few comments on the narrative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the first sentence, the way that the phrase "an education that equips . . ." is set off by dashes could be taken to mean that this</li> </ul> |
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| <p><a href="#">Bowman, Mary</a></p> | <p>phrase is a <u>definition</u> of "liberal education." That may not be the intention, but it is a likely reading, and the phrase itself is too narrow to be a true definition of liberal education. I suggest revising along these lines: "At UWSP, we believe that a liberal education equips students to recognize their talents and discover their potential. More than that, it is essential . . . . "</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The "But" that begins the second sentence doesn't seem warranted to me. Isn't this sentence extending/developing the point of the first sentence?</li> <li>• I like the emphasis on the role of gen ed in developing global citizenship, but it might not be a bad idea to also include mention of its other benefits: flexibility and adaptability in employment, personal growth, etc.</li> </ul> <p>And a few on the outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I agree with Dona's suggestions to change "analytical" to "critical thinking" and to include the sciences.</li> <li>• I'm a little concerned about specifying "interdisciplinary" ways in the fourth item. For one thing, I don't think we should exclude disciplinary approaches to problem-solving here: how about "discipline-specific and interdisciplinary"? Also, just as a practical concern, if we make interdisciplinary skills a stated learning outcome, then we will need to have sufficient interdisciplinary courses to give students opportunities to develop those skills. I don't know if we have enough such courses, or the resources to add them.</li> </ul> <hr/> <p><b>From:</b> Summers, Greg<br/> <b>Posted:</b> Saturday, November 22, 2008 7:29 PM<br/> <b>Subject:</b> Discussion of Program Outcome Proposal</p> <p>Please use this space to offer comments and suggestions regarding the Program Outcome Proposal. To begin, click the "Reply" icon to the right. You may respond directly to this message or to any posted below.</p> |
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|  <p><a href="#">Palmer, Debbie</a></p> | <p>I appreciate all the hard work the members of the committee have put in to revising these learning outcomes. I wondered if the "Recognize the importance of personal responsibility, social equity, and environmental sustainability in managing the world's resources" learning outcome would include service-learning? I think it does, particularly given the narrative portion where Chancellor Bunnell's Vision 2015 was referenced, but wanted to make certain.</p> <p>Also, would you consider scientific literacy to fit to the first or the last learning outcomes?</p> <p><a href="#">Show Quoted Messages</a></p> |
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Heywood, Neil

May I first offer my personal appreciation to you and your entire team for your dedication to this difficult and delicate endeavor.

Overall, I like much of the GEP Learning Outcomes in the proposal. These appear to conform quite closely to UW Systems' Shared Learning Goals, and incorporate or imply address of the skills and knowledges of the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. Perhaps my only wish would be to broaden GEP Outcome 3 to read "...sustainability during interactions with the world's human and natural resources."

I note that these GEP Learning Outcomes entail many of the career and employment knowledges and skills that current employers seek, listed on p. 9 of [Are They Really Ready To Work?](#) While workforce development is not the sole purpose of a liberal university education, some of the skills stated or implied in the latter report we do not overtly set as learning outcomes, but might warrant consideration either here or at later stages of the GEP process. Some possibilities include:

- 1) the spectrum of wellness: physiological (e.g., fatigue management), psychological (e.g., conflict resolution), and social (e.g., financial comprehension),
- 2) the development of lifelong learners ("learning to learn throughout life),
- 3) creativity and arts appreciation, including application of other basic knowledges to the development of shared aesthetics.

Watching with intense interest; but again Thank You for your effort so far.

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Williams, Michael

Thank you for your work, and thank you for the opportunity to comment at this stage of the process.

As several people have already commented, the dashes in the first sentence of the narrative suggest that they contain UWSP's definition of a liberal education. That surely cannot be the case. Perhaps the narrative at this point could be given some heft by specific reference to the statement adopted by the Board of Directors of the AAC&U in October, 1998.

The Learning Outcomes at first glance seem unexceptionable, but I believe that the skills in the first bullet need to be listed more specifically, as in the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes #2; otherwise, we leave unanswered the question of which skills are in fact "necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society."

I agree with Lorri Nandrea's observations 1) that a sense of historical depth should be conveyed by including the phrase "past and present" in bulleted item #2; 2) that the objectives should include student "understanding of the processes by which knowledge is produced in various fields."

I assume the Learning Outcomes are phrased in such a way as to accord with the requirements of measurability. However, I await with interest to

see how we might measure the recognition of importance (bullet 3).

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Sirabian, Robert

It is very true that students often do not have a clear understanding of how GDRs relate to their major courses or, more generally, of the purpose of our GE curriculum. The definition of a liberal education might include a statement about the relationship between a liberal education and profession education, that they are complementary and reinforce each other. Also, this definition might more clearly connect a liberal education to the individual and the benefit of knowledge/skills/values for each individual, who can then become a global citizen. Global citizenship is perhaps over-emphasized.

The second learning outcome--"Demonstrate broad knowledge" might also include the importance of interpreting language, of understanding historical perspectives, and of reading literature from various disciplines. "Global citizenship seems over-emphasized--although I understand why it is included throughout the document.

Thank you for sharing GEP documents and open process of reviewing it.

~~~~~

General Education Policy Review Committee Open Forum

December 9, 2008 6-8pm CCC 321

GEPRC members present: Don Guay, Gary Olson, Randy Olson, Julie Schneider, Greg Summers

Attendees: Jason D'Acchioli, Robert Nemeth, Sudevan Padmanabhan, Dona Warren

Attendees asked for a summary of the process we've followed so far. Don Guay provided the following: Convened in Feb. 2008. Drafted a mission statement for Gen Ed that was passed by Faculty Senate. Over the summer GEPRC members read materials related to Gen Ed and drafted a Gen Ed proposal with specific categories and learning outcomes and # of credits/category. Campus feedback indicated we needed to step back and provide an explanation of why we came up with that model and those categories as well as provide some overall program goals and outcomes. GEPRC will now present each step separately to the campus, gather feedback via the web and open forums, consider the feedback and make appropriate changes, present the revisions to

Academic Affairs, who will either move it on to the Faculty Senate for approval or send it back to GEPRC.

Q: Will new courses need to be created or will the current GDR courses fit into the new model?

A: Both. However, all courses will need to be approved by the GDR subcommittee according to the new learning outcomes.

Q: Is there someone versed in assessment and writing learning outcomes on the committee?

A: GEPRC asks for feedback from Karyn Biasca, co-chair of the Assessment subcommittee and Shari Ellertson, Policy and Planning Analyst.

Q: Will all courses directly connect to these 4 Program Outcomes? The connection needs to be transparent.

A: Yes. If done correctly, all Gen Ed courses will fall under at least one of the 4 Program Outcomes.

GEPRC Clarification: It is not appropriate to mention all Skills and Knowledges at the "Program Goals" level. Many more details will be included in the actual breakdown of individual categories. The 4 "Program Goals" are meant to be broad.

Q: What impact do individual dept. have on these outcomes?

A: If a majority of faculty feels strongly that an outcome is not appropriate or that something is missing, the GEPRC would consider that and make an adjustment. However, if only one dept. or few faculty feel that way, Academic Affairs would see those comments and the GEPRC's rationale for not heeding them. Once it gets to Faculty Senate, it is hoped that all necessary revisions will have been made. This is why feedback is so crucial at this point. Unfortunately, the committee has not received much relative to the # of people this will affect. Attendees suggested that perhaps GEPRC members should come to individual dept. meetings to gather feedback.

Q: What about allowing people to post feedback anonymously?

A: GEPRC members felt that if critiques were anonymous, people could become very negative without having to take ownership of their opinions and that wouldn't be productive.

Q: What about adding to the FAQ page on the GEPRC website to dispel rumors and misconceptions about the process.

A: GEPRC members will consider this. They also mentioned that the administration has been very “hands-off” on purpose so that it does not appear that this is orchestrated from above.

Q: What about resources? What if what is proposed will require new resources to implement?

A: The Provost told the GEPRC to plan without worrying about resources, but rather, what’s best for students. Attendees expressed doubt whether, in these budget times, the support will be forthcoming.

It was suggested that we post the comments from the open forum. Minutes were being taken and will be forwarded to Academic Affairs with all other email comments.

Critical thinking is missing from the “Demonstrate quantitative, communicative, and analytical skills necessary to succeed in a rapidly changing global society.” Critical thinking is not the same as analytical thinking.

Natural Science knowledge/literacy is missing. Couldn’t it fit in “Demonstrate broad knowledge of the world’s peoples, cultures, and social institutions.”?

Is there a more robust word for “Recognize” in “Recognize the importance of personal responsibility, social equity, and environmental sustainability in managing the world’s resources.”? Perhaps “Show a commitment to...” GEPRC members pointed out that the verb must be assessable.

Attendees asked for an explanation of the types of gen ed models. Core: all students take a prescribed set of common courses. Distribution: similar to our current GDRs.

Q: Could “communication” be taught by different majors?

A: Yes, as long as it meets the learning outcomes of the communication requirement.

Q: Could “writing” be taught by different majors?

A: Same as above.

Currently faculty are discouraged to develop interdisciplinary courses because the SCH is either split between the dept. An incentive would be to grant the SCH to both dept. collaborating on an interdisciplinary course.

Many faculty believe that certain requirements will not be abolished because of the size of the program and the number of students and/or faculty/staff it serves. GEPRC members reassured the attendees that there are no “sacred cows”.

Q: How courses will be approved as gen ed?

A: GEPRC members explained that first a faculty member will have to demonstrate that his/her course meets the new gen ed criteria for a particular learning outcome; then after a TBD time frame, assessment results will have to prove that the students are meeting the learning outcomes.

Q: When will credits be assigned to Gen Ed categories?

A: Last.

Q: Why is the AAC&U pushing the LEAP-Liberal Education and America’s Promise agenda and why is UW System adopting it? Are there any incentives?

A: So that UWS administration, faculty and staff can explain to non-academics in straight-forward language what a liberal education is and why it’s important for the state of WI and what students gain from a liberal education.

Critical Thinking discussion with Dona Warren:

GEPRC is concerned that the term “critical thinking” is really just a buzz word. Dona Warren maintains that it is a real skill in its own right and provided a definition:

Critical thinking is the process by which we consciously and intentionally work toward

- 1) a reasoned understanding and evaluation of claims,
- 2) a reasoned understanding and evaluation of the evidence and arguments supporting claims, and
- 3) a clear formulation and an adequate defense of claims.

Critical thinking skills are specifically aimed at advancing this process.

Dona also further commented that she thinks “analytical” in the first bullet point of the GEP Learning Outcomes should be replaced with “critical thinking” to read “Demonstrate quantitative, communicative, and critical thinking skills necessary to

succeed in a rapidly changing global society.” She would like to see this replacement because “analytical” is included in “critical thinking” insofar as analytical skills are exactly the skills involved in understanding claims, evidence and arguments, whereas “critical thinking” is not included in “analytic” insofar as analysis needn’t involve a reasoned assessment of the claims, evidence, or arguments analyzed. Critical thinking is essentially the two-staged process of analysis and evaluation, and the evaluation leg is too important to leave out. (To make the relationship between analysis and critical thinking a bit clearer, we could replace “understanding” in the above definition with “analysis,” if we wish, although “understanding” might be just a *bit* broader and that breadth might be a virtue.)

GEPRC members questioned whether critical thinking wasn’t already inherent in all GDR courses. Dona maintained that it is not explicit in instruction currently. It could be specifically emphasized in GDR courses, e.g, “critical thinking in the context of xxxxx”. This could set us apart from other campuses if we were able to advertise that our students become proficient in critical thinking skills and it was set apart as a separate learning outcome. It would require retooling of current courses to shift emphasis on critical thinking.

The GEPRC brought up the idea of requiring a minor. Some wondered if that is appropriate. How prescriptive should we be with students’ program choices?

One fear with a “free elective” choice in GDRs is that students will choose the disciplines they are most comfortable with and not expose themselves to new ones.