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# Assessment of Student Learning minutes 11/29/ 2012

Assessment of Student Learning Committee

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**Assessment of Student Learning Committee  
November 29, 2012 Minutes  
8:00 a.m., Sci 2555**

*Present:* Ted Pappenfus (chair), Stacey Aronson, Jana Koehler, Nancy Helsper, Wendy Emo, Emily Sunderman

*Absent:* Barbara Burke, Steve Burks, Brooks Jessup, Andrew Sletten

Ted reviewed the agenda for this meeting: 1) to decide on questions to add to the General Education Survey given to graduating seniors in the spring; and 2) to finalize the streamlining and simplification of the language used to describe the General Education (GenEd) requirements in the survey.

**Proposed Questions for Addition to GenEd Survey:**

Wendy noted that the survey does not allow students to say what influence their prior life has had on their general education. The survey data is useless in a way because we have not defined a starting point for students. Ted replied that the ASLC had decided to limit the number of questions on the survey to the first two (level of importance and achievement) in each category. We have asked the disciplines to address assessment of their GenEd courses this year. We want to be able to compare the GenEd Survey responses with those of prior years and so will not deviate too much from previous years' questions.

Wendy wondered if, in the process of assessing, disciplines will look at students before the course has started and after the course has finished. Stacey said that would be up to each discipline to decide; Spanish will be using the before/after process for one of their new courses. Ted noted that the GenEd Survey is meant to be more broad in scope. The disciplines will give us more meaningful data than the GenEd Survey.

Ted asked ASLC members to look at the list of questions (distributed at the meeting) that were submitted by various committee members as possible additions to the GenEd Survey.

Jim said he submitted two subsets and did not expect to have all of the questions added. He was thinking about comments he had heard that prior surveys showed that students do not recognize the importance of general education. One argument in favor of general education is that students become better citizens. The question is whether students believe that is true, or are even aware of the argument. Nancy asked about the type of response that would be expected for this type of question. Jim said response choices would be "strongly agree" through "strongly disagree." Ted said he preferred questions #1-2 and 4-5. Nancy asked if instructors actually talk to students about their choice of courses or if that is typically only done by advisers. Jim said the chemistry discipline has an exit survey that does ask those questions. Emily said she does not talk to her instructors about course choices. Wendy offered the opinion that "general education" works better than "liberal education," politically. She prefers "valuable" to "important."

Ted suggested that we include one of the five questions proposed in Jim's "Subset B." He noted that the topic of this set of questions is included in the UMM mission statement. Jim said he prefers question #4 because it is more impersonal. Wendy agreed. There was a consensus to include question #4 from Subset B.

Ted asked ASLC members to consider the questions from Nancy and Jana together, since there is a similarity on one question. Wendy said Nancy's questions #1 and 2 get to the purpose; all four questions are good. Ted prefers Nancy's questions #1, 2, and 4. There was a consensus to add Nancy's questions #1, 2, and 4 (note: question #4 is very similar to Jana's question).

A comment was made that students should have their APAS report handy before taking this survey. Students do know where to find their APAS online and could have it open on the computer screen when they do their survey.

Next the committee looked at Emily's and Brook's questions. After some discussion, it was decided that we should ask about transfer courses rather than credits. The transfer information is printed on the APAS report, in case students forget. We could have the question ask students to rate the value or quality of learning in their general education courses at UMM vs. elsewhere.

The last proposed question was from Ted. Nancy suggested changing "liberal arts" to "UMM" as students may not know what "liberal arts" references.

### **Revising Language in GenEd Components:**

Ted said the second document we need to work on is the language for the GenEd components as stated in the GenEd Survey itself. The intent is to make the survey more streamlined and consistent. Wendy drafted a proposed language revision and the document was distributed at the meeting.

*III.B. Social Sciences Component.* Ted passed along a comment from Steve Burks with a suggested rewording which included mention of scientific approaches. It was noted that the rewording was quite lengthy. Wendy suggested adding "and scientific approaches to the study of" to the original wording and ask Steve to comment on that. Ted said he will send a revised document to the entire committee asking for final comments.

*II.B. Foreign Language Component.* Stacey said the language used for foreign language requirements has changed over the years with the current thinking being that students cannot possibly be fluent after one year of classes. She suggested changing the wording to "...begin to communicate in a language other than their own and to gain insights into other cultures." Ted said he liked eliminating the term "proficiency" since students don't understand what is meant by that term.

*III.C. Humanities Component.* Wendy noted that the second asterisk is missing on this one. She suggested adding “(\*communication, language, literature, and philosophy)” at the end.

*III.D. Fine Arts Component.* This rewording was approved.

*III.E. Science Component.* Although it was noted that “the scientific method” was left out of the revised wording, this was approved as revised without the phrase.

*III.F.1. Human Diversity Component.* Nancy mentioned that “various groups” is vague and wondered if a little more description should be added. It was agreed that “human variation” should be included.

*III.F.4. Ethical/Civic Responsibility Component.* It was agreed to change the rewrite to “...to develop students’ understanding of values and responsibilities and their ability to create new ways to resolve ethical issues.”

Stacey asked if there was a subcommittee working on a rewrite of the entire General Education Requirements. Nancy, who attends all Curriculum Committee meetings, said she was not aware of any committee working on the GER wording. She thought it would be a good idea for the ASLC to review the GER components for assessability—can they be measured? Ted agreed that the GER needs to be stated in terms of learning outcomes.

Ted asked Wendy to send him an updated GenEd Survey language revision document that he will send it along to the entire committee for final approval.

**Next Meeting:**

Ted said he would be asking for schedules in order to plan a meeting time for spring semester. He plans to schedule the first meeting early in the semester.

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.  
Submitted by Nancy Helsper