

ATTACHMENT 191/14

UAF Faculty Senate #191, May 6, 2013

Submitted by the ad hoc General Education Revitalization Committee

LEARNING OUTCOMES AND GENERAL EDUCATION

The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) framework of learning outcomes entitled "Liberal Education and America's Promise" (LEAP) recognizes four broad goals of general education: increase disciplinary knowledge, develop thinking skills, connect academic work with societal issues, and prepare for lifelong learning.

Faculty Senate action

With these goals in mind the Curricular Affairs Committee, on 2 May, 2011, transmitted GERC's proposal to the UAF Faculty Senate which approved:

1. that the UAF Faculty Senate adopt the following objectives and learning outcomes as the basis on which to develop the next general education strategy for UAF and to develop assessment strategies for their achievement, and
2. that these objectives and learning outcomes be treated as a "living document" subject to revisions approved by the Faculty Senate or designated committees
3. that these objectives and learning outcomes will not replace the current objectives of the core curriculum until the process of developing a new general education curriculum and outcomes assessment is completed.

New (LEAP-inspired) learning outcomes

General education objectives and learning outcomes for the undergraduate students seeking baccalaureate AA and AS degrees at the University of Alaska Fairbanks:

1. Build Knowledge of Human Institutions, Socio-Cultural Processes, and the Physical and Natural World through study of the natural and social sciences, technologies, mathematics, humanities, histories, languages and the arts.
Competence will be demonstrated for the foundational information in each subject area, its context and significance, and the methods used in advancing each.
2. Develop Intellectual and Practical Skills across the curriculum, including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, written and oral communication, information literacy, technological competence, and collaborative learning.
Proficiency will be demonstrated across the curriculum through critical analysis of proffered information, well-reasoned solutions to problems or inferences drawn from evidence, effective written and oral communication, and satisfactory outcomes of group projects.
3. Acquire Tools for Effective Civic Engagement in local through global contexts, including ethical reasoning, intercultural competence, and knowledge of Alaska and Alaskan issues.
Facility will be demonstrated through analyses of issues including dimensions of ethics, human and cultural diversity, conflicts and interdependencies, globalization, and sustainability.

4. Integrate and Apply Learning, including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies, adapting them to new settings, questions, and responsibilities, and forming a foundation for lifelong learning.

Preparation will be demonstrated through production of a creative or scholarly product that requires broad knowledge, appropriate technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, interpretation, presentation, and reflection.

Background

The General Education Revitalization Committee (GERC) and its predecessor, the Core Revitalization and Assessment Group (CRAG)—with representation for a cross-section of faculty, administrators and staff, and support from the broader UAF faculty—recommended revising the UAF Core Curriculum to incorporate a LEAP-based set of learning outcomes tailored to UAF's special qualities and circumstances. During 2011, GERC circulated drafts for comment to academic deans, department chairs, curriculum councils and faculty for comment; and held two faculty forums to solicit feedback. The feedback received supported the approach and much of it was incorporated into the proposed set of objectives and learning outcomes.

From the outset, the challenge has been to set goals to present to the faculty that are at once general enough that they do not dictate strategy or tactics, yet concrete enough to be assessable in ways that have sometimes eluded the Core Curriculum. In 2011, GERC proposed to the faculty the learning outcomes summarized below with three disclaimers. First, these learning outcomes do not necessarily correspond to courses; many are explicitly envisioned as being addressed across the entire curriculum. Second, GERC remains uncertain and needs to turn to its colleagues for input on issue related to operationalization of the new outcomes through the selection of appropriate courses. Third, faculty should be fully engaged in and take ownership of all processes related to specifying and implementing the resulting programmatic changes, including:

- 1) establishing the objectives and methods for fulfilling the new learning outcomes;
- 2) determining the range of options available to students satisfying—simultaneously and without creating any additional burden for students—the new learning outcomes and the General Education Requirements established by the Board of Regents, and
- 3) assessing the outcomes of the revitalized general education program as a whole.

Process and Timetable

GERC, CAC and Faculty Senate will need to decide when and in what form to approve a new model for general education. GERC is committed to a deliberative process with its proposal refined through faculty input. Nevertheless, the process whose progress is summarized in this document is in its third year and should be concluded as soon as possible. Therefore, GERC will take the following actions for the Faculty Senate to consider:

1. Submit a more complete report on GERC findings and recommendations as a discussion item at the first regularly scheduled meeting of the UAF Faculty Senate, fall semester 2013,.
2. Submit a proposal for a new general education model to the Curricular Affairs Committee to be transmitted to the Faculty Senate for approval at its second regularly scheduled meeting of fall 2013.

3. Organize a series of public meetings and consultations with faculty, cognizant administrators, staff and students on the proposal to receive input on such matters as: defining criteria for the new course Attributes; creating a process for reviewing courses; recommending specific courses for inclusion; and revisions of any aspect of the proposal.
4. Submit a revised and more detailed proposal to Faculty Senate in the form of potential catalogue copy for the general education requirements and a process for reviewing courses for inclusion in one of the new Attributes categories.

UAF Faculty Senate Learning Outcomes and Possible Course/Credit Requirements

The following are suggestions for the numbers of credits and types of classes that may be used to satisfy each Learning Outcome. In total the courses listed below could replace both the Core and related baccalaureate degree requirements such as Social Science and Humanities electives, Communication and Quantitative Reasoning.

Outcome #1. Build knowledge of human institutions, socio-cultural processes, and the physical and the natural world through the study of the natural and social sciences, technologies, mathematics, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts.

Competence will be demonstrated for the foundational information in each subject area, its context and significance, and the methods used in advancing each.

Fulfilled by:

- 4 cr of Natural Sciences
- 3 cr of Mathematics
- 3 cr of Arts
- 6 cr of Social Sciences
- 6 cr of Humanities

Outcome #2. Develop intellectual and practical skills across the curriculum, including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, written and oral communication, information literacy, technological competence, and collaborative learning.

Proficiency will be demonstrated across the curriculum through critical analysis of proffered information, well-reasoned solutions to problems or inferences drawn from evidence, effective written and oral communication, and satisfactory outcomes of group projects.

Fulfilled by:

- Writing, including information literacy (6 cr)
- Communication: written, oral and visual (3 cr)
- Quantitative Literacy (3 cr)

Outcome #3. Acquire tools for effective civic engagement in local through global contexts, including ethical reasoning, intercultural competence, and knowledge of Alaska and Alaskan issues.

Facility will be demonstrated through analyses of issues including dimensions of ethics, human and cultural diversity, conflicts and interdependencies, globalization, and sustainability.

Fulfilled by taking one course with each of the following groups at some point before graduation (these courses may also fulfill other GE, major or minor requirements within limits allowed by current policy):

major, minor, or elective credits:

- Civic Engagement (3 cr)
- Alaska and Alaskan Issues (3 cr)
- Intercultural Competence & Diversity (3 cr)

Outcome #4. Integrate and apply learning, including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies, adapting them to new settings, questions, and responsibilities, and forming a foundation for lifelong learning.

Preparation will be demonstrated through production of a creative or scholarly project that requires broad knowledge, appropriate technical proficiency, information collection, synthesis, interpretation, presentation, and reflection.

Fulfilled by:

- A capstone course or experiential learning opportunity (e.g. internship) in student's major

Challenges and Opportunities: GERs and Learning Outcomes

BOR General Education Requirements and the new Learning Outcomes (adapted from LEAP outcomes) share a fundamental goal: to prepare++ students who are broadly trained and socially and intellectually aware. But they flow from different philosophies: GERs pursue breadth through the satisfaction of course requirements in specified disciplinary areas; LEAP outcomes encourage students to integrate, critically evaluate and apply their undergraduate training holistically. But the two are not incompatible, and while the process of making them work together is complex, the product for the end user (the student) will not be. The UAF Core Curriculum was an early attempt to accomplish this. In passing the new Learning Outcomes, the Faculty Senate recognized that LEAP provides an opportunity to take the project to the “next level.”

Additionally, there is a question of assessment. Both GERs and the Core are assessable on a course-by-course basis. But neither presents the opportunity to assess the value to the student of the entire experience or the effect it has had on their abilities to apply the more specialized knowledge they receive through majors, minors and certificates to their post-baccalaureate studies and/or the “real world.” Learning outcomes are better suited to that purpose. And, although the documents prepared by GERC have not directly addressed assessment, it has been actively considered by GERC in its deliberative processes.

The longer *GERC Proposal*, sets forth definitions and explanations of the new learning, meant to serve as discussion points for engaging faculty in the process of selecting relevant courses and activities. The following—using a Q&A format—attempts to:

- Suggest how to optimize the compatibility of GERs and the new Learning Outcomes by applying a new set of “Attributes”* to existing, revised and new courses;
- Give examples of how a very wide range of colleges, departments and programs can be directly involved in the delivery of coursework that satisfies both GERs and Learning Outcomes;
- Suggest multiple ways in which students pursuing any BA or BS degree can satisfy both sets of requirements in 39 credits (the number required by the current Core) or less;
- Indicate how and why faculty from all departments and programs should be engaged participants in all aspects of development and implementation.

* “Attributes” is the term currently being used by GERC to describe 4 new tags that may be attached to specific courses that satisfying a new learning outcome. The Attributes—A, C, E and D—would be appended to course numbers in much the same way that O and W now are, to indicate to students that successfully completing this class will help satisfy a general education learning outcome requirement.

GERs and the New Attributes

Q. How will students know if they are taking classes that satisfy a new Learning Outcome?

A. The exact notations are not set in stone,, but for the sake of illustration: Courses that may be used to satisfy Learning Outcomes 1 and 2, which will also satisfy some of the skills-based GERs, will have numbers ending with X: for example, English F111X, Communication F141X. Or they will carry a **C attribute, for Communication**. For Outcome 3 there will be new attributes attached:

A--Alaska and Arctic Issues

D--Intercultural Competence & Diversity

E--Civic Engagement

Q: Can students satisfy new requirements and BOR GERs within the current 39-credit minimum established by the current Core Curriculum? **Will it be possible to do so in less than 39 credits?** Will it be possible for AA degree-seeking students to satisfy at least some of the new requirements too? **Will these changes expand the range of choice available to students**—i.e. can we make them less restrictive than the Core?

A: Yes to all of the above, if **colleges, departments and faculty from all of UAF can identify or modify existing courses and/or are willing to develop new courses that satisfy both BOR GERs and qualify for an A, D or E attribute.**

Q: What would such courses look like?

A: They would have to: 1) Have the basic characteristics of required by BOR policy for a category of the Common Core of General Education Requirements (see below) and 2) meet the requirements for carrying a A, D or E attributes as described above. (And, although less likely, if they are upper division classes they might also qualify for a C attribute.)

Hypothetical 1: ENGL 217, Themes in Literature, seems like a natural choice to be both a BOR humanities GER and carry a D attribute, providing the description specifies that literature from a variety of cultures is examined from multiple perspectives.

Hypothetical 2: PS 202, Democracy and Global Society, JUST 110, Introduction to Justice, and NRM 101, Natural Resources Conservation and Policy may already satisfy BOR requirements for a social science GER. With the addition of a project in which students analyze or contribute to a relevant organization or activity they could merit an E attribute.

Hypothetical 3: GEOS 101X (The Dynamic Earth) and GEOS 120X, Glaciers, Earthquakes and Volcanoes already qualify as a GER and both contain (as currently taught) sufficient Alaska/Arctic content to carry the A indicator as well.

Hypothetical 4: (With a little tweaking for some) it is likely that most of the currently offered “X” courses under “Perspectives” would continue to qualify as BOR humanities, arts, or social science GERs *and* could take on a D, E or A attribute.

Hypothetical 5: Numerous upper division courses, taken for major and minor requirements or as upper division electives would currently qualify for one or more attribute, or could be revised, if departments and faculty so desired, to carry one. For example, most courses offered by ANS and ANL

and many GEOG, ANTH, SOC and PS classes could take on a D attribute. Several GEOS, BIOL and MSL classes could carry the A attribute.

Q: Who would offer such courses?

A: Essentially, that decision rests with the faculty, department heads, deans and directors based on their own assessments of their programs' needs and interests.

For courses that would carry an attribute and satisfy BOR requirements for humanities, arts and social sciences most, but not all, of the responsibility falls on the College of Liberal Arts. Courses given by NRM, RD, MIN, MILS, *inter alia* could qualify too.

Faculty will need to receive a clear set of BOR requirements for qualifying courses, and participate in establishing specific requirements for each of the new attributes. Then they will have to decide which courses they would like to submit for the dual distinction of being a BOR GER and carrying a new attribute. In short, many colleges, departments and programs already offer courses that could do double duty (GER and attribute) and/or would be highly motivated to find ways to create new opportunities to add attributes to their courses.

Q. What about that C attribute? Doesn't that mean that students will no longer get to refine their writing and oral communication skills in their major?

A. Not at all. The C attribute "modernizes" the Os and Ws by retaining the goal of advanced training in written and oral communication while recognizing the multimedia nature of modern professional communication and the need for technological, information and media literacy.