

Annual General Education Report to the University Academic Planning Council

April 21, 2005

In its role as trustee of the campus-wide General Education requirements and as agreed at the University Academic Planning Council meeting of December 18, 1997, the College of Letters and Science is pleased to submit its annual report on the General Education requirements at UW-Madison. As has been the case for the last several years, this report is also submitted by the University General Education Committee (UGEC).

Status and Progress Reports

Ethnic Studies Implementation: There will be a separate report from the Ethnic Studies Implementation Committee.

Math Core Plus: At the request of the Director of Admissions and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, a subcommittee of the UGEC, chaired by Professor Chuck Halaby, has studied the issue of high school Math Core Plus curricula and UW-Madison admissions statements. The subcommittee has drafted a preliminary report which will be discussed by the full UGEC and then will be sent to appropriate groups on the campus.

Assessment:

- Professor Denise Solomon who had directed the Verbal Assessment Project left the University for a position at Pennsylvania State University. Professor Joel Robbin who had directed the Quantitative Assessment Program took on significant new administrative duties in the Math Department and was unable to continue as Director of the Quantitative Assessment Program. Melania Alvarez-Adem who had staffed the QAP is currently on leave from the University. Dean Phillip Certain appointed Professor Chuck Halaby of Sociology as Research Director for General Education Assessment in 2004-05.
- Student articulation and awareness of the goals of general education: Drs. Elaine Klein and Brian Bubenzer, both trained focus group facilitators, conducted several focus groups with first semester freshmen this past fall to determine the students' level of understanding of general education requirements and goals. Results of the focus groups led to a strong conclusion that our beginning students have very little knowledge of the requirements or about how advisors could assist them in understanding the requirements. With this baseline information in hand, we can now turn to the task of how best to articulate the requirements and goals to students.
- QR-A assessment: Professor Halaby, with the assistance of the Testing and Evaluation Office and the UW Survey Center, is conducting two separate QR-A assessment studies in this academic year. The first involves a test/re-test of the Math Placement test for a random sample of students who tested into Math 112 and are enrolled/not enrolled in a QR-A course. The main purpose of this study is to determine the effect of course enrollment on math skill abilities. The second study is a survey in which students report their self-assessment of several quantitative reasoning skills. This survey is being administered to random samples of students who tested into Math 112 and are enrolled/not enrolled in a QR-A course. The test/re-test was administered this past fall

semester and will be administered again in the current semester. The survey is currently in the field.

- **Information Literacy:** A 2002 study conducted by Denise Solomon and Abbie Loomis found that about 75% of students in the information literacy library module of Comm A (a two-part module that students in all Comm-A sections must complete) applied licensed -web search strategies as taught in the module while 25% continued to rely on the free web for their follow-up research assignment. The study concluded that for many students “Google” and “research” are synonymous and that to help them move beyond Google will require additional learning experiences with licensed Web resources in other classes. To assist instructors in providing appropriate guidance for students, a “ Tips for Designing Library Research Assignments” for Comm B instructors was developed. At the urging of the UGEC, this information will be included in the future on the routine mailings to Comm B instructors.

Transfer Students: As a follow-up to the excellent work of the Committee on the Transfer Student Experience, the UGEC devoted much of its time in a fall semester meeting to a discussion of the needs of transfer students as they relate to general education. Transfer students make up about 20% of any graduating class at UW-Madison. When Associate Vice Chancellor Virginia Sapiro, who headed the CTSE, surveyed capstone course instructors on the writing, reading, literacy and knowledge in the major of their students without providing any information on transfer students or transfer student issues, she found that first-year starts were twice as likely as transfer students to be rated above the norm. The UGEC discussed several ways of approaching this issue and the needs of transfer students in general; Committee members are currently following up on several of them. A special technical committee involving staff from the Registrar’s Office and the Admission Office which has met sporadically for years on issues relating to students receiving Comm B transfer credit inappropriately due to limitation of the transfer credit system reconvened and has now, hopefully, decided upon some partial solutions to this problem. A pilot “TRIGs” program for transfer students akin to the very successful FIGs (First Year Experience) Program is currently in the planning stages. Ways of communicating more directly with transfer students about Comm A and Comm B experiences and skills are being explored.

Respectfully submitted by:

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University General Education Committee, 2004-2005

Nancy Westphal-Johnson, Letters and Science Administration, Chair

Term Members:

Cary Forest, Physics
Camille Guerin-Gonzales, Chicano Studies
Liane Kosaki, Political Science
Ellen Sapega, Spanish & Portuguese
Susan Smith, Nutritional Sciences
John Strikwerda, Computer Science
Michael Subkoviak, Educational Psychology
Andrew Wolpert, Classics & History

Ex Officio:

Melania Alvarez-Adem, Quantitative Assessment Project (on leave Sem II)
Richard Brualdi, Math, Quantitative Reasoning Liaison
David Fleming, English, Comm A Director
Charles Halaby, Research Director for General Education Assessment, Sociology and Assoc.
Dean-Soc. Science, L&S
Brad Hughes, Writing Center and Writing Across the Curriculum
Elaine Klein, L&S Administration
Abbie Loomis, Coordinator of Library & Information Literacy Instruction Program
Sherry Reames, English; Communication Liaison
Virginia Sapiro, Assoc. Vice Chancellor, Political Science and Women's Studies
Greg Smith, L&S Student Academic Affairs
Tim Walsh, Cross College Advising Service

Student Members:

Matthew Berg
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Core Plus Subcommittee

James Anderson, Philosophy
Melania Alvarez-Adem, Quantitative Assessment Program (on leave Sem II)
Richard Brualdi, Math
Charles Halaby, Sociology and Associate Dean for Social Sciences, L&S, Chair
Sue Smith, Nutritional Sciences