

**General Education at PLU  
Annual Report  
Academic Year 2011-12**

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*Background*

Council Members for the year included: Adam Cathcart (Social Sciences, Fall), Lauri McCloud (Social Sciences, Spring), Tom Carlson (Natural Sciences), Claudia Bergeson (Humanities), Heather Mathews (SOAC), Callista Brown (FYEP), Carmina Palerm (IHON), Pat Roundy (Academic Advising), Kris Plaehn (Registrar), Karen McConnell (Assessment, Fall), Jan Lewis (Associate Provost).

The Council met every other week over the academic year.

*Work Accomplished 2011-12*

Course Review for General Education Requirement Approval. The General Education Council reviews EPC proposals that request approval for meeting General Education requirements. The following courses were reviewed and approved:

IHON 326: Cross-cultural/Perspectives on Diversity  
PHIL 226: Philosophy  
SCAN 341: Alternative/Perspectives on Diversity  
COMA 499: Capstone  
MUSIC 499: Capstone  
ARTD 499: Capstone  
HIST 233: Cross-cultural/Perspectives on Diversity  
RELI 213, 214: Religion (RG, RC)

Policy Considerations. The Council considered a proposal from the First-year Experience Program Steering Committee requesting that all students entering as first-year students with less than 30 semester hours of transfer credit must participate in the First-year Experience Program, including completion of WRIT 101, a 190 course, and a J-term course. This policy was approved by the Council, EPC, and the Provost.

Assessment. Assessment continues to be a major initiative of the General Education Council. See attached for assessment plans (2010, 2011, 2012). The conceptual structure of the assessment plan remains the same—essentially, three stages: First-year (CLA, interviews/surveys of first-year students, assessment of FYEP); across General Education elements through on-going program review and interview/survey; and at the Senior level (CLA, interviews/survey, and Capstone assessment). The framework of the General Education Assessment Cycle provides the ability to review elements over a five year period, using year 6 to implement a wide-ranging curricular review.

*General Education Elements.* The assessment of General Education elements has proven to be one of the most challenging. While departments remain the “owners” of the

elements and their courses in most cases, gathering universal data is not always easy. We are hoping that program review could be helpful here, and will hope that annual reports could also provide some data. See initiatives for the 2012-13 year for next steps.

During the 2010-11 academic year, the committee initiated a review of the *Capstone experience* at PLU. The resulting document outlined basic similarities and focus, and during the 2011-12 academic year, sponsored a set of workshops around effective, successful capstone experiences. At a minimum, these results have invited conversations around the capstone experience, expectations by departments, and perhaps a broad definition of what a PLU capstone represents. For the Spring capstone presentations, all schedules for all Divisions, Schools, and Departments were published on the GenEd website. The review of the capstone experience continues, including issues around faculty workload as well as the possibility of carrying the FYEP assessment of writing through to the capstone experience.

During the 2011-12 academic year, the *Perspectives on Diversity element* was the focus element. In the fall, all faculty teaching a course designated as meeting a Cross-cultural (C) or Alternative (A) Perspectives on Diversity Course were asked to complete a simple curriculum mapping exercise. See Attachment B for the report. The findings show that an important beginning point is to encourage faculty to note in syllabi that courses do, indeed, fulfill the requirement for this element. In mid-August, an email memo to faculty teaching Perspectives on Diversity courses will encourage the mention of the GenEd curriculum in syllabi. See attachment B.1 for guidelines.

Again, as in the previous year, the results of the review of a specific GenEd element raised the importance of uplifting the common language of the *ILOs*. This year, we asked faculty submitting curricular mapping examples to also consider ways that their course provided opportunities for students to be introduced to, have experience with, and be assessed in their abilities around the Multiple Frameworks ILO; it is clear that students have multiple opportunities throughout the courses offered to operationalize this ILO. See the General Education Assessment Cycle for the year-by-year examination of particular ILOs in Attachment A. See below for additional survey and interview data from students regarding their interaction with ILOs.

In another related conversation encouraged by the FYEP steering committee and faculty as related to goals and objectives of the full participation in the Common Reading Program by new students and faculty/staff, it was clear that the ILOs do implicitly drive what we expect of our students as related to academic behaviors. See Attachment C for academic behaviors for students and Attachment F.1 alignment to ILOs .

Considering ways to uplift the ILOs remains an initiative of the General Education Council—what are ways to message, beyond the context of a syllabus, this common language? The questions posed in last year's report remain: Where do we assess these outcomes, and, in particular, how do we highlight their integrative nature? Data from interviews and surveys will also help to highlight and demonstrate values and abilities around the ILOs.

*Surveys.* The Council has implemented a cycle of yearly surveys of students at all levels, as well as interviews of First-years and Seniors every other year. The survey questions included the same two initial questions as from last year:

How has your General Education experience challenged you to grow in a profound way?

If you could change one thing about your General Education experience, what would it be?

The third questions (with three sub-questions) focused on the Multiple Frameworks ILO:

How have you encountered the Multiple Frameworks ILO in your General Education courses?

Through these Perspectives on Diversity courses, has your understanding of diversity changed? If so, provide examples of course experiences.

Have these courses provided you with particular strategies to engage difference both within and beyond the classroom?

Many recurring themes have emerged from Question #1 and #2. Please see attached charts for results, and for alignment to ILOs. Clearly, many students are able to talk about their General Education courses as pivotal in helping them to see issues and ideas from multiple perspectives, and that these courses have helped them to gain in those skills, abilities, and values we hold as important goals from a PLU education.

In regard to the Multiple Frameworks ILO, 72% (18/25) responded with examples of how they had encountered multiple frameworks within their coursework. Three students gave study away as an example. Four students felt they had not encountered any form of this ILO across their coursework. Thirteen students (52%) felt their understanding of diversity and multiple perspectives had changed, while 44% felt it had not. Fifty-two percent of the respondents felt they had gained strategies for living within diverse and multiple frameworks, while 28% felt they had not. See Attachment D for survey results, and Attachment D.1 for ILO alignment to these recurring themes.

Interviews. In the interviews, it is clear that seniors are well-able to articulate the importance of being a member of the supportive PLU community, and that the interaction with others and ability to clearly express oneself are important outcomes from this participation. The ability to consider issues and ideas from multiple perspectives is another recurring theme. Students felt that the advising framework was important to their success, and that the increasing publication and access to resources is important. See Attachment E for complete interview results.

Other Assessments. Review of two other more random, but available, pieces of data emerged from the WRIT 101 Common Assignment and interviews of graduating seniors by University Communication staff.

Some consistent themes and important questions emerged from the WRIT 101 Common Assignment. How do things change between the Fall Semester and the Spring Semester for students? Clearly, students feel more confident about their writing, effective process, and in their critical thinking abilities. See Attachment F for themes as compared to the three FYEP themes and Attachment F.1 the alignment chart for FYEP to the ILOs.

University Communications interviewed a set of graduating seniors, published in the Scene as well as on the PLU website. Curious if there were any themes about their PLU education, these documents were scanned for consistent themes. The following themes emerged as critical to the PLU experience: Building community through strong relationships (Interacting with Others, Expression), Being challenged in ways that resulted in strong personal growth (Critical Reflection), Being led to explore passions and vocation (Critical Reflection, Valuing, Multiple Frameworks, Expression), Embracing a

global perspective, via social justice and sustainability (Valuing, Multiple Frameworks). See Attachment G for the text of these interviews.

A Summary of Assessment for 2011-12 can be found in Attachment H.

*Emerging Initiatives.* For the coming year, we will begin an investigation of the Valuing ILO, as well as review the ILO alignment documents submitted by departments in 2009-10. We will be asking departments who contribute to the General Education Program to consider ways the ILOs as well as the specific course objectives for the GenEd course are assessed and discussed as program review. Faculty Development will focus on the results of the Perspectives on Diversity curriculum mapping, beginning with a joint session by the University Diversity Committee and the General Education Council to consider a mutual understanding of diversity at PLU, and how it might be represented in the curriculum.

All reports, data and resources will be published on the General Education website through the Office of the Provost.

Faculty Development. Two members attended the AAC&U General Education and Assessment Conference in New Orleans.

We use a session at Fall Faculty Conference to distribute our review findings each fall. The capstone session was well-attended and resulted in lively conversation and food for thought around expectations for student work as well as for faculty load.

The GenEd Council will work with the UDC to initiate the process for considering what we understand as diversity at PLU. From this understanding, the council will compare curriculum to this understanding for coherence. A goal for this year is to increase opportunities for faculty to talk about General Education in an interdisciplinary way.

Curriculum Development. Conversations will continue around the Perspectives on Diversity element in relationship to the call for a common understanding of diversity at PLU. Interest in how sustainability should be represented in the curriculum remains high.

### *Initiatives for 2012-13*

#### ILOs:

Messaging

Review 2009 Documents: Department GenEd Objectives, alignment to ILOs; review of assessment measures at the department level

#### Capstones:

Pilot a reflective essay to compare to the FYEP data

Continue to publicize dates of capstones

Continue to find ways to share and uplift positive structures for courses, mentoring, etc.

Can we capture similarities?

#### GenEd Elements:

Design Perspectives on Diversity Faculty Guidelines

Gather data on the Valuing ILO

Review 2009 Documents: Department GenEd Objectives, alignment to ILOs; review of assessment measures at the department level

Curriculum Design:

Continue to consider the Perspectives on Diversity element in relationship to 2020.

Reporting to faculty, encouraging interdisciplinary conversations:

How best?