

**General Education at PLU
Annual Report
Academic Year 2010-11**

Jan Lewis, Associate Provost
July 2011

Background

The General Education Council was convened under new faculty legislation guidelines in September 2010.

Council members for the year: Chi-Wei Wang (Social Sciences, Fall); Adam Cathcart (Social Sciences, Spring); Tom Carlson (Natural Sciences); Claudia Bergeson (Humanities); Michael Stasinos (SOAC); Callista Brown (FYEP); Carmina Palerm (IHON); Pat Roundy (Academic Advising); Kris Plaehn (Registrar); Karen McConnell (Assessment); Jan Lewis (Associate Provost).

The Council met every other week over the academic year.

Curricular Innovations and Revisions/Work on Pedagogy Initiatives for 2010-11

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

HIST 348: Social Science

IHON 252: Cross-Cultural/Perspectives on Diversity

PHED 248: PE Activity

PHIL 227: Philosophy and Alternative/Perspectives on Diversity

WMGS 499: Capstone

MATH 145: Math

RELI 246: Religion and Cross-Cultural/Perspectives on Diversity

Policy Considerations. The Council considered the requirement that transfer students need to fulfill two separate courses for Religion and Perspectives on Diversity when other students can now “double dip” both Perspectives on Diversity courses. Policy was approved by the Council, EPC, and the Provost that now enables transfer students to double dip their Perspectives on Diversity courses.

Assessment. Assessment continues to be a major initiative of the General Education Council. See attached assessment plans (2010, 2011). 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 assessment of *General Education elements* has proven to be one of the most challenging. While departments remain the “owners” of 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.

To begin to wrestle with this question, the committee decided to initiate *a review of the Capstone* experience at PLU. There has never been any effort to “curriculum map”, essentially take a picture of, how capstones are different and similar across departments, schools, and programs. The council requested syllabi, and other background information, along with any assessment rubrics, for review during Fall semester. Departments, schools, and programs were very generous and willing to provide the information. The Council spent Spring semester reviewing the data. See attached summary. This information will be presented at Fall Faculty Conference for response.

As a result of this exercise, the place of the *ILOs* again emerged. Are they genuinely the overarching outcomes of our General Education program? If so, how do we define where these happen? How do we assess their integrative nature? A revision to the assessment plan includes gathering information from element course faculty regarding how they incorporate ways to interact with particular elements in their classes, and examples of student work that portrays responses to the ILO expectations. See attached chart for the year by year examination of particular ILOs.

While the Council was satisfied by last year’s pilot *interviews* of first years and seniors, they decided to expand this initiative through offering a random *online survey* to select students at each level, First Year through Senior. A total of seventy-seven students participated during late Spring semester: 27 First Years, 20 Sophomores, 29 Juniors, 31 Seniors. While interviews remain important, the online survey allows for a broader range of students. Interviews at the First Year and Senior levels will be conducted every two years. See attached plan.

The three questions of the survey included:

- 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?
- How have you encountered the ILOs in your General Education courses?
- (For seniors only) To what extent did your General Education coursework prepare you for your capstone experience?

Please see attached for initial categories of results. These have yet to be distributed to the GenEd Council as the completed survey results were completed and received in early June. Generally speaking, General Education courses do challenge students to grow in multiple ways, many that do align in some ways with the ILOs. However, it is still the case that few students are aware of the ILOs as specific outcomes, though, in general, many felt that they do gain this set of integrated sensibilities and habits of mind. Again, the question emerges about the role of the ILOs, and the extent to which faculty “own” them and portray them as essential to the academic work of the university.

Next year, the data gathering focus will be on the *Multiple Frameworks element*. We will ask faculty who teach in GenEd elements to provide examples of assignments they believe provide students the opportunities to interact with the outcomes of this element, and to also provide examples of student work. Next summer, the GenEd

Council, along with interested faculty, will participate in a workshop where they will review the assignments and student work to develop benchmarks/rubrics that generalize across elements and disciplines. The survey will include a question directly related to the Multiple Frameworks element.

Three General Education Council members did attend the AAC&U General Education and Assessment Conference in Chicago. This is very supportive of the assessment work of the Council.

Faculty Development. The most important way for the results of the General Education assessment results to be turned into action at this point in time is through faculty development opportunities. Our cycle focuses on data-gathering around a particular focus (e.g., curricular investigation of Capstone experiences), summarizing the initial information, and reporting to faculty. From the resulting faculty conversations, we hope to determine ways to communicate differences, and to institutionalize the similarities, moving toward a way to show student outcomes around successful attainment.

Curriculum Development. The Perspectives on Diversity element is most likely the most challenging element of the General Education curriculum because it is not owned by a single department, school, or program. The Council has decided to bring the element review with Multiple Frameworks because of its direct relationship to this element, and is thus the beginning of a review of this element. This also coincides with emerging 2020 themes and questions regarding the definition of diversity at PLU, and the ways in which it manifests itself within the lives of the PLU community members.

Initiatives for 2010-11

ILOs: If these are general outcomes for General Education, how do we “own” them? Continue the discussion.

Capstones: Share data with faculty. What are ways to determine success of capstones? How can we find similarity across capstone experiences?

GenEd Elements: Gather data on Multiple Frameworks assignments. Gather student samples. Workshop to analyze in Summer 2012.

Curriculum Design: Begin to consider Perspectives on Diversity element in relationship to 2020.

From 2009-10:

Reporting to Faculty: What are best strategies?

Advising: Continue to work with Pat Roundy

CAPP: Continue to work with Registrar