

**General Education at PLU
Annual Report
Academic Year 2012-13**

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Background

Council Members for the year included: Martin Wurm (Social Sciences, Fall), Lauri McCloud (Social Sciences, Spring), Tom Carlson (Natural Sciences), Claudia Bergeson (Humanities), Michael Stasinos (SOAC), Erin McKenna (FYEP), Mike Behrens (IHON), Pat Roundy (Academic Advising, Fall), Hal DeLaRosby (Academic Advising, Spring) Kris Plaehn (Registrar), Karen McConnell (Assessment), Dave Veazey (UAAR, Spring) 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:

- SOCI 296: Perspectives on Diversity, A
- MUSI 378: Delete GenEd AR
- MUSI 320: GenEd AR
- SCAN 286: Perspectives on Diversity, A or C
- IHON 259: GenEd NS
- MATH/STAT 145: MR, NS
- EDUC 499: Capstone for new Education Major

Policy Considerations. The Council reviewed and approved a clarification to the SO language in the catalog.

The Council also began a commitment to review the General Education requirements for international students via the agreements composed through Admissions. The following policy has been adopted:

Policy on International Student General Education Requirements

The General Education Program at Pacific Lutheran University aims to provide a foundation in the liberal arts, focusing on “preparing graduates to ask significant questions, engage relevant knowledge, and wrestle with complex issues.” To this end, any student transferring from another institution, either domestic or international, should have access to parallel foundational preparation in order to engage successfully in PLU majors and minors.

Minimum expectations require students to enter with 60 credits that include, to some degree, cross-disciplinary coursework representing aspects of the liberal arts that are equivalent to half of the General Education Program requirements (6 courses, approximately 24 credits). These students would be required to take 4 hours of writing (WRIT 201, 202), 4 hours of religion (RC), 4 hours of philosophy, 4 hours of [alt perspectives], 4 hours of [scientific method], 4 hours of [art or literature].

The parameters of these requirements would encompass completion within two academic years, with full-time status across Fall, J'term, and Spring terms.

Assessment. Assessment continues to be a major initiative of the General Education Council. See attached for assessment plans (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013). 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 2013-14 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. A Faculty Fall Conference presentation invited on-going conversations; review of notes from these conversations will be reviewed in early Fall Council meetings. (See “Two Years Later” document.) The Council also began to consider a capstone common assignment, and invited a pilot in Spring 2013. Four faculty submitted results; the committee will review these data in the fall. A request was sent out to faculty responsible for Fall 2013 capstone seminars to pilot again.

During the 2012-13 academic year, no focus element was chosen.

Integrative Learning Objectives (ILOs). This year we focused on the Valuing ILO alone. We engaged in on-going conversations around how this particular ILO is intentionally embedded into what we do both curricularly and co-curricularly. See the General Education Assessment Cycle for the year-by-year examination of particular ILOs in Attachment A.

A discussion around the ILOs was held as a University House Noontime talk. “Living the ILOs” became a framework for this discussion, as well as a discussion at Fall Faculty Conference. See attached.

Data points included the Student Satisfaction Survey, as well as a theme-based review of senior student reflections and first-year student writing. It is clear that students self-report that their PLU experience supports their ability to reflect critically, express themselves clearly, and understand and apply their values (all 90% and above). Eighty-four percent of students reported their PLU experience helped them to employ multiple frameworks and effectively interact with others.

The theme-based review shows that student can articulate ways through which they apply the ILOs. For example, PLU experiences ask students to question their beliefs and to think outside of their comfort zone, to consider different perspectives, to think about their place in the global world, to find their passion and vocation.

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?

Unfortunately, a glitch in the survey system caused for only one student to respond to the survey—so no data this year.

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.

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA).

A Summary of Assessment for 2012-13 can be found in Attachment H.

Emerging Initiatives. For the coming year, we will continue an investigation of the Valuing ILO, as well as consider the three ability-based ILOS—Expression, Interaction with Others, and Critical Reflection.

As part of the Assessment Plan of the Annual Report, Deans and Chairs were asked to review the ILO alignment documents submitted by departments in 2009-10. Departments who contribute to the General Education Program were asked consider ways the ILOs as well as the specific course objectives for the GenEd course are assessed and discussed as program review. We will review these reports during the Fall Semester.

Last year, a focus on the results of the Perspectives on Diversity curriculum mapping invited 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. A result of this work was a proposal to the Provost to appoint an ad hoc committee to compose proposals for guiding principles, structures, and programming. The ad hoc committee report has been sent to both committees. Once reviewed, all reports, data and resources will be published on the General Education website through the Office of the Provost.

Joel Zylstra, Director of the Center for Community Engagement and Service, worked with the Council on a definition of service learning as an initial step in both clearly communicating to students this aspect of their courses as well as documenting those courses that provide this opportunity. We will continue to review this definition, and work collaboratively on strategies to communicate to students and document these courses.

Faculty Development. One member attended the AAC&U General Education and Assessment Conference in Boston.

We use a session at Fall Faculty Conference to distribute our review findings each fall. This fall, a 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; and, a session on how we “talk” about the ILOs in classes was well-attended, particularly by new faculty.

The GenEd Council will continue work with the UDC to support the work of the Ad Hoc Committee on Diversity, Justice and Sustainability. the process for considering what we understand as diversity at PLU.

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.

We seem to be at a kind of tipping point in regard to how capstones are defined within faculty load—while the seminars (at 1-4 credits) are now in load, consideration of what these experiences really mean in workload is a critical conversation.

Initiatives for 2013-14

ILOs:

Messaging

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

Gather data on how students are demonstrating the “valuing” ILO

Consider ways to gather data on the ability ILOs: Critical Reflection, Expression, Working with Others

Review CLA data

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:

Continue to work on DJS work, apply to Perspectives on Diversity

Continue to find ways to assess GenEd elements within department assessment plans

Curriculum Design:

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

Reporting to faculty, encouraging interdisciplinary conversations:

How best?