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TO: Sue Anderson, Chair, Undergraduate Affairs Council
FROM: Ielleen Miller, Chair, General Education Coordinating Committee
DATE: February 16, 2011
RE: General Education Curriculum Assessment 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 Summary Report

The General Education Coordinating Committee (GECC) has organized its assessment activities around three annual cycles that cover assessment of (1) university competency courses in English, Math and Computer Literacy, (2) core subject areas in Humanities/Fine Arts, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences, and (3) graduation requirements in Senior Capstone, International Studies and Cultural & Gender Diversity. In 2008-09, GECC assessed the classes taught for the core subject areas. Each member of the committee was assigned to evaluate particular reports and then discuss them with the whole committee. The following objectives for the core subject areas were selected for assessment during this cycle:

<u>Humanities/Fine Arts</u>: "Students should be able to describe the context of at least one philosophical, artistic, or literary example from a non-Western civilization."

<u>Examples of findings</u>:
- Using a rubric scoring system for student papers, faculty in Philosophy found that 40-48% of students "needed more work" on their paper. Faculty plan not only to spend more class time on non-Western sources of information but also to adjust assessment instruments so they better measure the SLO.
- In English, students wrote essays on short stories involving non-Western perspectives and 83% scored "satisfactory" or higher based on a rubric that focused on student ability to define examples, provide evidence from a text, and explain connections between evidence and the definition.

<u>Social Sciences</u>: "Students will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of selected data and/or information-gathering techniques and research methodologies."

<u>Examples of findings</u>:
- In Sociology, student knowledge was assessed through embedded test questions and the instructor found that most students could identify appropriate research methods but had more difficulty distinguishing non-scientific methods. She recommended providing more detail on research than was provided solely from the textbook.
- Psychology used a series of test-retest techniques to measure both mastery and retention of knowledge. The instructors found that, while most students performed well on mastery tests, they struggled with retention of knowledge in subsequent tests. Faculty have, thus, altered the schedule of exams such that students must take more time between tests before they are allowed to take follow-up tests to ensure more time for studying the topics.

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Natural Sciences: "Students will demonstrate their understanding of the difference between observation and inference."

Examples of findings:
- Chemistry assesses this SLO in a lab-based course. Most students scored above 80% on the laboratory assignment and, therefore, no recommendations for change were made.
- In an Honors section, students developed a research project and gave poster presentations. The instructor noted that providing an example paper boosted student performance and that students required more time to conduct thorough literature reviews for their project. The instructor also plans to have a librarian participate in instruction about how students can find appropriate materials for literature reviews.

In 2009-2010, GECC assessed the graduation requirements: Senior Capstone, International Studies and Cultural & Gender Diversity. Because there are a large number of courses taught that satisfy each of these categories, GECC only asked for assessments from the International Studies and Cultural & Gender Diversity courses taught in Winter 2010, and the Senior Capstones taught in Spring 2010. Also, to assist in evaluating the assessment reports in a consistent manner, GECC used a tailored rubric and members of the committees were assigned individual reports to evaluate.

The following objectives for the graduation requirements were selected for assessment during this cycle:

International Studies and Cultural & Gender Diversity: "Students will analyze multiple perspectives on a given issue related to the course content."

Overall findings: 32 assessment reports were submitted – 14 for International Studies and 18 for Cultural & Gender Diversity.
- 85% assessed the objective GECC requested, and 85% included the instrument they used to assess the objective.
- On a scale of 1 to 5 on how well the instrument assessed the objective, 64% were given a 4 or a 5, and another 26% were given a 3.
- 21% reported that virtually all of their students met the objective, and another 62% said that most of the students met the objective.
- 53% of the reports specifically discussed changes to course delivery that ought to be made in light of assessment results, and 12% found that no changes needed to be made in light of the results.

Examples of findings:
- From Introduction to Africana American Culture, AAST 214: "Students who excelled wrote strong arguments that expressed not only an understanding of the struggle (for equality), but a recognition that there truly isn't just one, singular approach that works best for obtaining equality and why."

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- From Anthropology 349, Major Civilizations of Asia: "The pre-test shows an average of 2.81 correct answers per assessment. In the post-test, this average increases to 4.45. This reflects a 63% increase over the pre-test."
- From Gender and Communication, CMST/WMST 414: "While a basic understanding of various perspectives on explaining gender differences is evident, it would be more beneficial to have students analyze each theory rather than choose only two. What all students were able to do very well is apply their choice of theories to their own lives, observations and life experiences."
- From Issues in Women's Studies, WMST 310: "Students demonstrated a very sophisticated sense of how actions carry varying political weight and meaning depending upon the cultural context in which the action occurs. The assessment demonstrated, however, that students did not fully appreciate cultural and geographical diversity within the geographical confines of the United States."

Senior Capstone: "Prepare a capstone project (in groups or individually) that showcases disciplinary knowledge, methods and skills."

Overall findings: 23 assessment reports were submitted from a wide variety of disciplines.
- 86% included the rubric they used to assess the capstone project.
- On a scale of 1 to 5 on how well the rubric assessed the capstone project, 69% were given a 4 or a 5, and another 5% were given a 3.
- 41% reported that virtually all of their students met the objective, and another 36% said that most of the students met the objective.
- 73% of the reports specifically discussed changes to course delivery that ought to be made in light of the assessment results, and 14% found that no changes needed to be made based on the results.

Examples of findings:
- In Women & Gender Studies 490, the instructor concluded that "although the portfolio-capstone project is very popular among students, they don't seem to continue using the website they created for professional purpose and maintaining an online identity."
- The instructor of Education 490 (the only course in which only about half the students met the criteria for excellence on the assessment) concluded that the course might be limited in future "to more advanced students with more experience in educational courses."
- In English 490, the instructor's report made clear what happened over the quarter by presenting "a holistic picture of student learning as well as a closer picture of the work that students are required to do."
- Health Services Administration 490 presented students with multiple challenges to succeed; its rubric was graded according to (1) presentation, (2) term paper mechanics, (3) a community service project, (4) a portfolio, and (5) a policy & procedure document.
- The design of the assessment in Management 490 was commended by a GECC reviewer thusly: "More than the other assessments I viewed, these did focus on 'solving a problem,' thus (in my opinion) creating a good learning opportunity."

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