

General Education Committee Agenda, February 12, 2008

1. Approval of Minutes of July 19, 2007
2. Review of UM's Approach to General Education
3. Campus-Wide Assessment Tools
 - MAPP
 - Surveys
 - Use of Result
4. Major's Embedded General Education Components
 - Audit the LO grids
 - Audit the course syllabi for the identified courses
 - Assessment of Ethics
5. Plagiarism Study Report
6. Art Performance Courses and General Education

SACS 3.5.1 “The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.”

UM has identified the following college-level competencies:

- Mathematical Reasoning
- Communication Competency
 - Written
 - Oral
- Analytical Reasoning/Critical Thinking
- Ethical Reasoning

We have identified these general education competencies, but have we adequately defined what we mean by “competency” in each area? What evidence do we have that our graduates have attained these competencies?

A. Core Curriculum Associated Teaching and Assessment of Competencies

- **Core Math Requirement** (students must pass Math 121, 115 or higher Math): The learning of mathematical skills is the essence of this course. The effective learning of math, in these multi-section courses, is laterally and longitudinally assessed using a common final exam; results are used to improve the teaching of math (can we document this; has there been improvement in scores?).
- **Core Writing Requirement** (students must pass Engl 101, 102 or Liba 102): Writing is the essence of Engl 101/102 and is a major component of Liba 102. The effective learning of writing skills, in these multi-section courses, is laterally and longitudinally assessed by sampling across sections and having a team of reviewers evaluate the samples using an established rubric; results are used to improve the teaching of writing (can we document this; has there been an improvement?).
- **Core Oral Requirement** (many students take Liba 102 and must pass it): Oral communication is a minor requirement in Liba 102. Is this being assessed?
- **Core Critical Thinking Requirement** (covered in the science and humanities, behavioral and social science core courses): Critical thinking skills are a significant component of all of these courses. However, this skill has so many different meanings that we do not have a systematic way of assessing critical thinking at the core course level. However, critical thinking is required for students’ success in these courses.
- **Core Curriculum Ethical Reasoning** (students are instructed about plagiarism in Engl 101 and Liba 102): This is a minor component of these courses, but it does expose the students to a certain level of ethical reasoning/awareness.

B. University-Wide Assessment of Competencies

- **MAPP Administration** (Business, Accountancy, Education, Engineering, Pharmacy this year, alternating with Liberal Arts and Applied Sciences): The University samples (by embedding in junior level major's courses) cumulative student learning via this instrument. Skills assessed are writing, critical thinking, and mathematics, as well as content knowledge in science, humanities and social sciences. We do not evaluate all students, but we rely on a consistent sampling procedure to provide longitudinal data and to enable comparisons to national standards. We do not have pre- and post-test information, however. Also, the results have not been used by departments to improve teaching, which is difficult to do because the instrument itself is not readily aligned with general education courses. Still, these results show that our students perform near the national average in these learning skills and content knowledge.
- **Graduating Student Survey and Alumni Survey:** These contain questions about whether the individual perceives that he or she has developed adequate skills in writing and oral communication. We also have NSEE survey data.
- **Course Evaluation Questions Regarding the Creed:** In Fall 07 we include five questions on the students' awareness of the University Creed and whether they perceived the tenets of the Creed to be followed in this course. Results of this survey can be used to demonstrate that students have a certain level of ethical awareness.

C. Major's Embedded Teaching and Assessment of Competencies

Learning Outcomes Grids for General Education Component with Majors:

- All majors are to have some courses that re-enforce the learning of:
 - Writing Skills
 - Oral Communication Skills
 - Critical Thinking Skills
 - Ethical Reasoning/Awareness
 (Math Skills, in some cases)
- Goal is for ALL majors to have courses that address the teaching of these four competencies.
- Audit the learning outcomes grids. If there are majors that do not re-enforce these competencies, have these exceptions justified and approved by the Gen Ed Committee.
- Audit the syllabi for the major's courses identified as supporting one or more learning competency.
- Have an assessment strategy (for at least one re-enforcing course per major) for each competency for each major. Accumulate evidence of assessment results, to the extent possible. Should have results for ethical awareness and writing skills in many majors. In cases where Speech is a required course, the fact that a student has passed the course should suffice as an indicator that a minimal level of competency has been attained.