

Gen Ed Advisory Committee Report on Undergraduate Learning Outcomes

Part I. BACKGROUND

A. Timeline

- 2000 - NWCCU recommends changes to UNLV's general education core
- 2003 - General Education Task Force appointed, chaired by Chris Hudgins
- 2004 – Task Force Report recommends “Interim Core,” revisions implemented in 2006-8 catalog
- 2004 – Director of General Education position created, filled by Beth Rosenberg
- 2007 – General Education Retreat revisits and develops outcomes
- 2007-2008 – General Education Advisory committee refines outcomes, makes preliminary curricular recommendations
- 2007-2008 Focus 50-100 Strategic Planning Process includes Education as main priority and recommends undergraduate outcomes
- Summer 2008 – UNLV sends teams to two AAC&U Institutes, generates reports. Education discussed at President's Action Planning workshop
- Fall 2008 – Education task force ready to begin developing Education part of Focus 50-100 strategic plan

B. Warrants for Change – Why Change General Education?

- General Education Task force implemented “interim” core
- New population of students
- National calls for undergraduate education reform to prepare graduates to function well in the 21st century global society and economy
- Desire to do something “not standard fare at public universities” (Smatresk, Gen Ed Retreat)
- Align undergraduate education outcomes with those of the Focus 50-100 Strategic Plan
- General Education (like any curricular program) should undergo continual improvement—never something that is “fixed” or “done” (positive assessment model, assessment as formative feedback)

C. 2007 Retreat

- **Common outcomes**
 - Global and cultural awareness, including foreign languages, study abroad, and diversity
 - Ethics and sustainability as dimensions of responsible citizenship
 - Practical skills including critical thinking, communication (spoken, written, and visual), quantitative and qualitative skills, team work, leadership, and an ability to model and apply abstract concepts to the “real

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- world”
- Student responsibility, self-awareness, and self-directedness
- Knowledge of history and fine arts
- **Common recommendations**
 - Support interdisciplinary and team-teaching in undergraduate general education
 - Explore ways to integrate co-curriculum with curriculum in general education
 - Structure general education to encourage good teaching and avoid “turf wars”
- **Overall**
 - More unified Core experience, interdisciplinary and team-taught courses
 - More integration with faculty development, research, and the co-curriculum
 - Extremely enthusiastic about second languages and study abroad
 - More information on model general education programs, how to teach innovatively, and how to integrate the co-curriculum
 - More support from administration in terms of incentives to teach general education courses and more support for team and interdisciplinary teaching.
 - Separate general education from limiting FTE politics
- For complete record, see http://generaled.unlv.edu/planning_retreat.html

Part II. RECOMMENDATIONS

- Working groups were formed after the Sept 7, 2007 General Education retreat in broad outcome classifications that were recommended by the Retreat’s participants
 1. Global and cultural awareness, knowledge of liberal and fine arts, foreign languages, study abroad
 2. Ethics and sustainability, responsible citizenship
 3. Communication skills, teamwork, leadership, student responsibility, self-awareness
 4. Information literacy, quantitative and qualitative reasoning, critical thinking, and research
- Throughout the 2007-2008 academic year the groups received additional input, and met independently to generate proposed outcomes and curricular recommendations in each major area. The groups submitted reports with proposed recommendations in April 2008.

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A. Undergraduate Learning Outcomes Recommendations

The following outcomes are derived from careful study of feedback generated at the UNLV General Education retreat in 2007 as well as from analysis of general education best practices and models, including Portland State, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), and the American Association of Colleges and Universities LEAP Report. For a complete record of resources consulted by the committee, see <http://generaled.unlv.edu/geac.html>

Outcomes (What we want students to achieve) and Objectives (How we will know students achieve the goals)

The undergraduate learning outcomes articulate clear expectations for what all UNLV students should know and be able to do upon graduation. The undergraduate learning outcomes form the foundation for general education but also extend into the majors. This comprehensive approach aims to meld undergraduate learning into a more intentional, coherent experience that consists of the purposeful sequencing of learning from the first year, to the middle years, to the senior year and includes learning both within and outside the major, including co-curricular experiences.

1. **Intellectual Breadth and Life-Long Learning Outcome:** Integrate differing perspectives of the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities and fine arts, and develop skills and desire for life-long learning

Competence in the Intellectual Breadth and Life-Long Learning outcome is defined by the following objectives:

1. Develop in-depth knowledge and skills in at least one major area
 2. Use the methods and models of the natural sciences to define, solve, and evaluate problems
 3. Use the methods and models of the social sciences to analyze individual and group behaviors
 4. Use the methods and models of the humanities and fine arts to interpret historical and contemporary cultures
 5. Apply knowledge and skills gained from general and specialized studies to new settings and complex problems
 6. Place questions or problems into personally meaningful contexts and demonstrate life-long learning skills
2. **Inquiry and Critical Thinking Outcome** – Use qualitative and quantitative reasoning and appropriate research methods to guide the collection, analysis, and use of information

Competence in the Inquiry and Critical Thinking outcome is defined by the following objectives:

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1. Analyze problems, articulate questions or hypotheses, and determine the need for information.
 2. Access and collect the needed information from appropriate primary and secondary sources.
 3. Use quantitative and qualitative reasoning, including the ability recognize assumptions, draw inferences, make deductions, and interpret information to analyze problems in context and draw conclusions.
 4. Recognize complexity of problems, tolerate ambiguity when appropriate and identify different perspectives from which problems and questions can be viewed.
 5. Evaluate and report on conclusions, including discussing the basis for and strength of findings, and identify areas where further inquiry is needed.
 6. Use results of inquiry and analysis to make judgments and guide actions.
3. **Communication Outcome** - Communicate effectively in written, spoken, visual, and digital modes

Competence in the Communication outcome is defined by the following objectives:

1. Demonstrate general academic literacy
 2. Use genres and conventions for writing within a particular discipline or profession
 3. Prepare and deliver effective oral presentations
 4. Collaborate effectively with others to share information, solve problems, or complete tasks
 5. Produce effective visuals using different media
 6. Apply the electronic technologies commonly used to research and communicate within one's field
4. **Global/Multicultural Outcome** - Develop knowledge of global and multicultural societies and an awareness of one's place in and effect on them.

Competence in the Global/Multicultural Outcome is defined by the following objectives:

1. Demonstrate knowledge of the history, philosophy, arts and geography of world cultures
2. Experience or interpret diverse perspectives linked to identity, including race, gender, and ethnicity, both in American and international contexts
3. Experience or interpret the concept of social justice
4. Display curiosity about other cultures, e.g., familiarity with a non-native language or experience living in a different culture
5. Function effectively in diverse groups
6. Demonstrate awareness of one's own place in and effect on the world

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5. **Citizenship and Ethics Outcome** - Participate knowledgeably and actively in the public life of our communities and make informed, responsible, and ethical decisions in one's personal and professional life.

Competence in the Citizenship and Ethics Outcome is defined by the following objectives:

1. Acquire knowledge of political, economic, and social institutions
2. Explore the various rights and obligations that citizens have in their communities
3. Experience or interpret the social, environmental, and sustainability issues of the larger community
4. Learn various forms of citizenship skills such as media analysis, letter writing, community service, lobbying, etc.
5. Engage in public discourse and exercise civic imagination
6. Learn and apply ethical reasoning and action in defined situations