General Education
Draft Learning Outcomes

Preamble

The recently appointed General Education Steering Committee is working to complete its first task of a four-part charge: "To develop a set of learning outcomes for general education consistent with the recently approved *Design Principles of General Education*, and to vet those learning outcomes with the college- and campus-level faculty councils." The steering committee did not start from scratch. Its draft set of learning outcomes builds on the recommendations of the studies that precede the committee's work — specifically, the General Education Reform and Assessment (GERA) Final Report (2005), the USP External Review Committee Report (2006), the UK LEAP White Paper (2006), and the most recent USP Revision proposal (Fall 2007). The draft learning outcomes are also informed by the Design Principles approved by the University Senate in March 2007.

The present steering committee has reviewed all of this foundational work as well as national dialogues regarding general education, and in addition has relied heavily on the faculty feedback that each of the above-mentioned reports invited and received. While we have altered some of the language in order to align this document with national assessment parameters, the core principles outlined in the draft learning outcomes adhere closely to the specific outcomes as well as the general philosophies outlined in the recent UK reports. We see these not only as a basis for future curricular and co-curricular discussions, but also as a dynamic document that will evolve through committee discussions and input from the university community. The learning outcomes and the *Design Principles of General Education* will frame and guide the development of a revised general education curriculum.

I. *Students will demonstrate an understanding of and ability to employ the processes of intellectual inquiry.*

Students will be able to <u>identify</u> multiple dimensions of a good question[1]; <u>determine</u> when additional information is needed, <u>find</u> credible information efficiently using a variety of reference sources, and <u>judge</u> the quality of information as informed by rigorously developed evidence; <u>explore</u> multiple and complex answers to questions/issues problems within the four broad knowledge areas: arts and creativity, humanities, social and behavioral sciences, and natural and physical sciences; <u>evaluate</u> theses and conclusions in light of credible evidence; <u>compare and contrast</u> the intellectual and creative contributions made by artists, humanists, scientists, and social scientists; and <u>develop</u> potential solutions to problems based on sound evidence and reasoning.

II. *Students will demonstrate competent written, oral, and visual communication skills both as producers and consumers of information.*

As producers of information, students will demonstrate the ability to <u>construct</u> intelligible messages using sound evidence and reasoning that are appropriate for different rhetorical situations (audiences and purposes) and <u>deliver</u> those messages effectively in written, oral, and visual form. As consumers of information, students will demonstrate the ability to competently <u>critique</u> (analyze, interpret, and evaluate) written, oral, and visual messages conveyed in a variety of communication contexts.

III. *Students must be able to (a) deploy rudimentary mathematical and statistical knowledge to solve real-world problems; and (b) explain the sense in which important everyday risks are quantified by statistical science, and appraise the efficacy of statistical arguments that are reported for general consumption.*

Students entering the University of Kentucky typically have already been exposed to elementary algebra and geometry. Notably fewer, but still a substantial fraction, will have also been exposed to elementary statistical methods. Almost none will have been exposed to the important nuances that separate inferential reasoning from deductive reasoning, nor will the majority be able to articulate the sense in which statistical inference reasons from empirical data and scientifically quantifies risk.

As students make the transition into University life, and subsequently

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[1] i.e., interesting, analytical, problematic, complex, important, genuine, researchable…

throughout their lives, they will be asked daily to assess, internalize, and make decisions based on mathematical and statistical information. To do this well, they will need to deploy a particular set of quantitative reasoning skills. We are using "deploy" in the sense of "operationalize" – to take knowledge that students have already acquired and engage it, so that they may effectively develop and hone their problem-solving skills. Additionally, since much of this information comes in the form of opinion polls, or studies that report the results of medical and behavioral experiments, students must acquire and be able to deploy basic inferential reasoning skills. The quantitative skills students must apply are based not so much on the mechanics of statistical methods as on statistical thinking, how statistical science quantifies risk, and the role of quantitative inference in decision-making.

IV.   *Students will demonstrate an understanding of the complexities of citizenship and the process for making informed choices as engaged citizen in a richly diverse, globally-interconnected, multilingual world community.*

Students will be aware of opportunities for civic engagement (locally, nationally, and transnationally); understand, appreciate, and respond effectively to cultural and linguistic differences (locally and globally); demonstrate a rich historical and comparative understanding of U.S. and global cultures and the role that race, ethnicity, gender, and socio-economic class play in shaping them; evaluate the socio-economic and ecological consequences of human activity on local, regional, and global systems; understand the interrelationship between cultures and structures of power; understand and justify ethical bases of personal and civic behavior; and evaluate the role of aesthetics, cultural tradition, and human creativity in shaping resources to contemporary issues.