

## **GENERAL EDUCATION STRATEGIC and ASSESSMENT PLAN**

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and  
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### **A. OVERVIEW**

The General Education Director (GE-D) and the General Education Subcommittee (GES) began discussions about developing an assessment plan in Fall 2005. Strategic plans are also called for; thus, in Winter 2006 the General Education Subcommittee, with the assistance of outside facilitators, began developing a Strategic Plan.

Developing a strategic plan and assessment plan for the General Education Program (GE) is challenging because it is neither an academic nor a service unit. Although it delivers an academic program, the GE Program does not have its own faculty. The GE Program is designed and delivered by faculty from across the university, through an elected faculty governance committee – the GES. A faculty member, serving as the administrative director of the program, is an ex-officio member of the GES.

The process of developing both these plans simultaneously has been, by design, slow. One third of the GES is re-elected every year; thus, we felt it was critical to develop and document our strategic and assessment plan so that our work this year can be effectively transmitted and implemented by the GE-D and the GES in upcoming years.

Unlike an academic unit that only needs to reach consensus within the unit, the GES will also need to obtain consensus of all university faculty if we want a sustainable, meaningful, participatory assessment process. To that end, many of the items listed in our assessment plan are not direct measures of student learning. During the next two years, we will flesh out our assessment plans by involving faculty from across the university, especially those who currently teach GE courses. This process will allow us to develop and implement additional direct methods of assessing student learning.

The plan described below is an evolving plan. Because of the unique nature of GE, it includes components that are not required by the University Assessment Committee.

## B. STRATEGIC PLAN

The Mission, Vision, and Values of the General Education Program are described below. The more detailed strategic plan is attached.

### **Mission**

The Grand Valley State University General Education Program provides a broad-based liberal education experience that fosters lifelong learning and informed citizenship. The program prepares students for intelligent participation in public dialogues that consider the issues of humane living and responsible action in local, national and global communities.

### **Vision**

Grand Valley State University students avail themselves of the broad range of opportunities offered through the General Education program to

- Develop the essential skills of creative and critical thinking, articulate expression through effective speaking and writing, and information literacy
- Enhance their knowledge of
  - Major areas of human investigation and accomplishment—the arts, the humanities, the mathematical, natural and social sciences
  - Their own cultures and the cultures of others
  - The tradition of humane inquiry that informs moral and ethical choices
- Strengthen their ability to integrate different areas of knowledge and view ideas from multiple perspectives.

The Grand Valley State University community—including students, faculty, staff and administration—values and strongly supports the General Education program. The General Education program is recognized within GVSU and beyond for the breadth, depth and coherency of its courses, the quality of teaching and learning in General Education courses, and the program's commitment to continuous improvement.

A committed and engaged General Education Subcommittee provides strong and visionary leadership for the program. Through its effective working relationships with GVSU's academic units and strong connections with GVSU students and alumni, as well as employers of GVSU students, the General Education Program assures that its evolving offerings continue to be effective and relevant in a changing world.

### **Values**

We value **collegial relationships**, characterized by respect, trust, and transparency, with faculty, students, academic departments, and administration.

We value **inclusion**, recognizing that a critical factor in the success of the General Education program is the active engagement of GVSU faculty, staff, students, alumni, and employers.

We value **continuous improvement** based on evolving knowledge, assessment processes, and changes in the local and global environment in which we operate.

We value **excellence** in teaching and learning.

## **C. GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM**

The General Education Program consists of a set of knowledge and skills goals. The program is structurally delivered via three components:

1. Foundations – students select eight courses from the six Foundation categories (Arts, Philosophy and Literature, Historical Perspectives, Mathematical Sciences, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences).
2. Cultures – students select one course from each of the Cultural categories (U.S. Diversity and World Perspectives).
3. Themes – students select three courses from one of 21 Themes. Themes are the upper-division component of the GE Program.

The entire GE Program consists of 13 courses. Some courses count simultaneously in two categories. The majority of students at GVSU enroll in one if not both of their Cultures classes that simultaneously count in a Foundation category; thus, they effectively take 11 courses. Since nearly all classes are 3 credits each, students take 33 credits of their 120 credits required for graduation as General Education courses. In some cases, GE courses also count in the major.

Currently, there are 269 courses in the General Education program. Approximately 20% of the courses offered at GVSU are part of the General Education Program.

## **D. RELATIONSHIP OF GENERAL EDUCATION TO BASIC SKILLS AND SUPPLEMENTAL WRITING SKILLS COURSES**

All-university requirements consist of General Education, Basic Skills (WRT 150, MTH 110, WRT 305/Jr essay exam), and completion of two Supplemental Writing Skills courses. Although this assessment plan includes reference to these other all-university requirements, we are not designing or implementing assessment of Basic Skills or SWS requirements.

## **E. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GE PROGRAM**

The General Education Program is designed and approved by faculty governance and implemented by faculty who teach courses in the program. The General Education Subcommittee is a subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee (UCC). The GES is the faculty governance body responsible for oversight of the program. Administrative support consists of a faculty member who has a three-fourths time appointment as the GE Director.

Because the GE Program is shared by faculty and administration alike, the assessment plan was reviewed by the University Curriculum Committee (for the GES) and the Dean of the College of Interdisciplinary Studies (for the GE Director).

UCC and GES responsibilities are delineated in the Faculty Handbook; the GE Director's responsibilities are listed in the job description.

## **GE SUBCOMMITTEE (Source: Faculty Handbook 4.6.4)**

### **Responsibilities:**

- To review and act upon courses proposed for the Basic Skills Requirements and the General Education Program;
- to review and act upon program requests for exceptions;
- to carry out, on a rotating basis, the review and evaluation of General Education courses so that each course is reviewed every three years;
- to call meetings of all faculty to discuss the aims, philosophy, and problems of the General Education Program;
- to propose revisions to the General Education Program as such revisions seem prudent and necessary.

## **UCC (Source: Faculty Handbook 4.9.4)**

The UCC is responsible for a wide range of curriculum matters at GVSU; its responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following

- to review and recommend to the ECS/UAS on all degree requirements and on all new program proposals;
- to review and recommend on all proposals involving academic credit, including continuing education;
- to conduct periodic program evaluations;
- to review the courses recommended by the colleges to fulfill the General Education requirements;
- to ensure that the purposes of General Education are fulfilled in all elements and aspects of the program;
- to review the work of the International Studies Advisory Board;
- to review the Honors courses and seminars which will take the place of General Education and Basic Skills requirements in the Honors Program;
- to review the proposals of the colleges for programs to be offered off-campus and to
- recommend to ECS/UAS on matters of purpose and function of off-campus and summer programs
- to review and recommend to the ECS/UAS on all proposals for the initial accreditation and subsequent reaccreditation of programs and units.

## **GE DIRECTOR (Source: Job Description)**

### **Responsibilities:**

- Oversee the GE program and related issues.
- Work with the GES and the Dean to ensure the quality of the GE program.
- Review students' requests for transfers and substitutions for their GE requirements.
- Work with the College of Interdisciplinary Studies Dean and other college deans to schedule and staff appropriate GE sections at all locations.
- Monitor developments and trends related to GE and lead efforts to improve the GE program.
- Prepare a yearly budget and work with the Dean to allocate funds to achieve the goals of the GE program.
- Develop and manage review processes that ensure that there are sufficient General Education sections available to students.
- Provide assistance and financial support to faculty, units, colleges in the development and improvement of courses for GE.
- Help create and implement policies that ensure that faculty who teach in GE are recognized and rewarded.
- Create and implement activities that help students understand the philosophy of GE and the reasons why they take GE.
- Work with the First Year Experience Committee and the Claiming a Liberal Education Initiative and other undergraduate programs to increase awareness and improve the quality of our GE program.
- Work with the Assessment and Accreditation Officer to develop outcomes assessment of the foundation courses and participate in writing assessment documents.
- Manage the design and disbursement of information about the mission, goals and requirements of the program, first year orientation materials, catalog copy, the GE booklets, faculty updates, pamphlets and videos.

## **F. DELIVERY OF THE GE PROGRAM**

The GE Program is delivered both at GVSU (Allendale, Grand Rapids, and three regional campuses) and through schools internationally via the Study Abroad Program. Additionally, transfer students may take General Education courses at two-year and other four-year institutions.

Students in the Honors program take a sequence of Honors-only courses designed to achieve the skills and knowledge components of the GE Program.

The vast majority of courses are delivered in a classroom, but some are available on-line. Instruction is by Tenure-track faculty or Adjuncts.

## **G. GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND PHILOSOPHY FOR GE ASSESSMENT**

The principles and philosophy guiding our assessment plan are important for us to articulate given that much of our assessment will involve faculty from outside the GES to design and implement.

### Purpose

1. The purpose of assessment is to improve teaching and learning in GE courses.
2. Components of our assessment plan and report may also be used for accreditation.

### Responsibility for Assessment

1. Assessment is a shared responsibility between faculty and administration (Higher Learning Commission North Central Association).
2. We will design our assessment measures to distribute the work between the GE Subcommittee, GE Director, and faculty teaching courses in the GE Program.

### General Principles

1. We will start small.
2. We will build a sustainable assessment plan.
3. We will have a transparent process.
4. We will have an inclusive process.
5. Assessment will be adaptive. Our assessment processes will evolve as our understanding grows, as we discover what other units do, and as faculty develop expertise in assessment.
6. Assessment will be data-driven.
7. Achievement of GE knowledge and skills goals is not solely a function of the General Education Program. Other academic and service units help achieve these goals as well.
8. We will coordinate our efforts other units whenever possible.
9. We will develop and communicate a process that enables us to describe, evaluate, and change the GE program.
10. We will develop and communicate a process that enables us to describe, evaluate, and change teaching and learning in courses.

### Faculty and Staff Development Activities

1. Faculty and staff development (short workshops, longer institutes, and personal consulting about topics including syllabus development, student learning outcomes, designing courses to achieve the outcomes, and rubric development) is required to do embedded assessment measures (as opposed to measures that are external to the course).
2. We will make faculty development activities available to all faculty and to staff as appropriate.
3. Faculty development will be an ongoing process and will be modified as assessment data become available.

### Relationship with Faculty and Staff

1. We will trust our colleagues and will maintain collegiality throughout the process.
2. We will recognize and reward faculty and staff in their assessment efforts.
3. We will be respectful of faculty and staff time by designing an efficient assessment plan.
4. We will involve faculty teaching the courses in developing student learning objectives and assessment measures.
5. We will communicate regularly with the entire GVSU community – students, faculty, staff, and administration – about our goals, assessment activities, results, and actions to improve our program.

### Measures

1. We will use multiple measures to describe, analyze, and evaluate our progress.
2. We will seek to measure learning in a meaningful manner.

### Sampling

1. Assessment will use both sampling and census approaches.
2. When direct measures are developed, the dominant approach will be to use sampling.
3. We will start with the willing - while randomized testing is useful and is the ultimate goal, our overarching goal is best achieved by being patient until we develop a culture of assessment.
4. Assessment will usually be conducted for courses and subcategories on a rotating basis.
5. Our assessment process is not designed to evaluate faculty.

### Nationally-normed Measures

1. Some nationally-normed measures will be used.

### Longitudinal Measures

1. We will use some measures that assess change over time – either before and after a class, or over the student's college experience.
2. The GE skills should be tested over the student's college experience but they may also be assessed in individual courses.
3. Knowledge goals from Foundations and Cultures should be assessed in those classes rather than at the end of a student's college experience since for most students, these courses are the foundation and terminal course in this area (most students will not take another course in these categories unless it is a part of their major).

### Level of Assessment

1. Assessment will be done at multiple levels – program, category, sub-category, and course.

### Relationship to Other Assessment Plans

1. Assessment of some GE skills goals is also being done by other units (e.g., SWS, academic units, library) and may be incorporated by reference in subsequent assessment plans and reports.

### Results

1. We will report our results in a meaningful manner (short, data-driven, complete with charts and tables).
2. We will share assessment data with faculty teaching GE courses in a timely manner.
3. Initially most data will not be reported for individual courses – data will be aggregated to the subcategory or category level.
4. We will develop reporting mechanisms that makes it easy for units to assist us in aggregating data.
5. We will make explicit how data are aggregated or how data from other units are incorporated into our assessment reports.
6. We will report both averages and the full distribution of quantitative data since we strive to improve learning for all students.
7. We will describe our results and honestly evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our program.

## **H. HISTORIC GE ASSESSMENT**

Some aspects of the program have been analyzed but a systematic approach to assessing General Education at the Program, Category, Subcategory, or Course level is largely missing. The historic (not currently functioning) assessment of GE is a periodic review of courses by faculty Peer Groups. It was done in 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003. As outlined in the GE handbook (2004-05) the GE assessment consisted of four parts:

1. analyzing syllabi
2. student response to an assessment instrument
3. statement from each instructor detailing how his/her sections meet GE goals
4. evaluation from departments about the course met the goals and objectives.

Foundations were assessed by Peer Groups who met, reviewed the four items listed above, and reported their results to the GES. Cultures were assessed by the GES. Themes were assessed by Theme instructors who met, reviewed the four items, and submitted a report to the GES. Peer Groups evaluated several Foundation categories. All of these assessment activities used indirect rather than direct measures of student learning.

A group consisting of faculty and administrators from outside of the GES, were convened to develop an Assessment Plan for GE. The report, issued in 2003, was not adopted by the GES.

## **I. NORTH CENTRAL ASSOCIATION ACCREDITATION**

During our last accreditation visit, it was noted that GVSU had significantly revised their program by adding Themes. The North Central Association (NCA) accreditation team noted that “At present there is no program for assessment of student learning within the program, but plans are in place to create that component” (NCA, 1999). As the previous section on the history of GE assessment indicated, assessment activities were implemented for a couple years and then ceased. Even if we had continued to implement the 1990s-era assessment plan, it would not meet NCA accreditation requirements because it contains no direct measures of student learning.

GE is a major mechanism by which GVSU achieves its mission; thus, it is critical that we demonstrate how well the program is helping achieve GVSU’s mission. Based on the criteria in the Higher Learning Commission Handbook for Accreditation, it is clear that GE plays an important role on campus. General Education appears as both a Commission Statement and as a Core Component (4b), in part, because GE is common to all students and comprises much of a student’s education. Institutions’ failure to address programs that cut across the campus, such as General Education, was identified by NCA as one of the top three problems with accreditation self-studies (Appleson, 2006).

## **J. ASSESSMENT**

Some of the items below describe an assessment process, rather than actually implementing assessment measures. Without spending the time to collaboratively develop an assessment process, our efforts are likely to fail. At the end of two years we will have developed a shared system of assessment that is well-documented, effective, and efficient.

Assessment of student learning goals for GE will take place at the program, category, subcategory, and course level. Student goals, faculty goals, and administrative goals are also included. These levels are described below.

### **1. PROGRAM**

The focus of the programmatic assessment is to evaluate how the GE courses collectively contribute to learning.

#### **1A. Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)**

“The CLA combines two types of testing instruments:

Performance Tasks - Students must complete a “real-life” activity (such as preparing a memo or policy recommendation) by using a series of documents that must be reviewed and evaluated. Completion of these instruments does not require the recall of particular facts or formulas; instead, the measures assess the demonstrated ability to interpret, analyze and synthesize information.

Writing Prompts – [Writing Prompts] evaluate students’ ability to articulate complex ideas, examine claims and evidence, support ideas with relevant reasons and examples, sustain a coherent discussion, and use standard written English.”

[http://www.cae.org/content/pro\\_collegiate.htm](http://www.cae.org/content/pro_collegiate.htm)

Type of Measure – Direct

Sample Size – 309 Freshmen and 94 Seniors

Sample – Random sample of students identified by Institutional Analysis

Frequency - Freshmen Fall 2005, and Seniors Winter 2006; Freshmen to be re-tested as Seniors in 2009.

Cost – Institutional Analysis budget (test + stipend to participate + prizes)

Delivery – On-line proctored exam

Student Learning Outcomes: critical thinking, analytic reasoning, written communication

Nationally normed – Yes

Value added – Yes

## **1B. Other Units' Assessment Activities**

Some academic and service units are doing direct measures of GE skills such as writing and oral communication. The GES can use other units' assessment measures and results, where appropriate, in our assessment plan. Initially, we will identify this information from examining all assessment plans turned in to UAC. Indirect Measure 1F describes this process. Once the matrix is developed, we will develop a system to incorporate these direct and indirect measures into our assessment plan when appropriate.

## **1C. National Survey of Student Engagement - NSSE**

“The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) is specifically designed to assess the extent to which students are engaged in empirically derived good educational practices and what they gain from their college experience (Kuh, 2001). The main content of the NSSE instrument, The College Student Report, represents student behaviors that are highly correlated with many desirable learning and personal development outcomes of college.” Kuh, G.D. (2001). The National Survey of Student Engagement: Conceptual framework and overview of psychometric properties. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Center for Postsecondary Research.

Indirect measures such as NSSE, FSSE, CIRP, and CSS survey faculty and students about levels of student engagement (activities, behaviors, and values) which are empirically correlated with student learning. They are self-reports. While these indirect measures are useful in that they provide an institutional-level perception, they do not help us identify how individual courses in GE achieve GE goals.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size –820 Freshmen and 626 Seniors participated (45.7 and 40.6% participation rate)

Sample – Census of Freshmen and Seniors

Frequency – Winter 2005, 2007, 2009

Cost –The cost of NSSE are in the Institutional Analysis budget.

Staff: GE-Assistant Director to link NSSE data to GE goals.

Delivery – electronic, administered by GVSU Institutional Analysis

Student Learning Outcomes: Specific questions that relate to GE:

“To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas (very much, quite a bit, some, very little):

- Acquiring a broad general education
- Writing clearly and effectively
- Speaking clearly and effectively
- Thinking critically and analytically

- Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Developing a personal code of values and ethics

Individual questions are summed into five categories:

1. Level of academic challenge
2. Active and collaborative learning
3. Student-faculty interaction
4. Enriching educational experiences
5. Supportive campus environment

Nationally normed – Yes

Value added – Yes

Specific to GE – No

### **1D. Cooperative Institutional Research program (CIRP) – Freshman Survey**

“The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) is a national longitudinal study of the American higher education system. Established in 1966 at the American Council on Education, the CIRP is now administered by the Higher Education Research Institute under the direction of John H. Pryor. The CIRP is the nation's largest and oldest empirical study of higher education, involving data on some 1,800 institutions and over 11 million students. It is regarded as the most comprehensive source of information on college students. The annual report of the CIRP Freshman Survey provides normative data on each year's entering college students.”

<http://www.gseis.ucla.edu/heri/cirp.html>

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – Freshmen

Sample – Census

Frequency – 2004, annually

Cost –The cost of CIRP are in the Institutional Analysis budget.

Staff: GE-Assistant Director to link CIRP data to GE goals.

Delivery – At Orientation, by Institutional Analysis

Student Learning Outcomes – somewhat similar to NSSE, the results can be used to compare our freshmen with other colleges and universities. Also, starting Winter 2007, specific GE objectives can be added to the standard test to parallel the ones asked on the Senior Survey (CSS).

Existing questions related to GE:

- Student rated ability:
- Public speaking ability

## Writing Ability

Reasons for going to college

To gain a general education and appreciation of ideas

To make me a more cultured person

Essential objectives:

Helping to promote racial understanding

Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures

Nationally normed – Yes

Value added – Yes, when combined with CSS (below)

### **1E. College Student Survey (CSS) – Senior Survey**

“Developed by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), the College Student Survey (CSS) is administered through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP), which has conducted national surveys of college students and faculty since 1966. When used in conjunction with the CIRP Freshman Survey or the Your First College Year (YFCY), the CSS generates valuable longitudinal data on students’ cognitive and affective growth during college.”

“The College Student Survey (CSS) helps institutions respond to the need for assessment and accountability data by providing information on a broad range of student outcomes.”

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – Variable

Sample – All Seniors who took CIRP in Fall 2002

Frequency – Winter 2006, every 2 years

Cost –The cost of CSS are in the Institutional Analysis budget (~\$3,000).

Staff: GE-Assistant Director to link CSS data to GE goals.

Delivery – On-line starting 2006, Institutional Analysis

Nationally normed – Yes

Value added – Yes, when compared with CIRP Freshmen Survey

Student Learning Outcomes – Somewhat similar to NSSE, can be used to identify what our students thought of their experience at GVSU. Also, starting Winter 2006, specific GE objectives were added to the standard test.

Questions added:

Compared with when you first started college, how would you describe your:

Related to GVSU Values statement  
Understanding of your Liberal Arts education

General Education Knowledge Goal 1  
Knowledge of the arts  
Knowledge of the humanities  
Knowledge of the natural sciences  
Knowledge of the social sciences

General Education Knowledge Goal 2  
Understanding of your own culture  
Understanding of people of different races and cultures

General Education Knowledge Goal 3  
Understanding of your own values  
Understanding the consequences of your choices  
Understanding alternate value perspectives

General Education Skills Goal 2  
Ability to think creatively

General Education Skills Goal 3  
Ability to locate information effectively  
Ability to evaluate information effectively  
Ability to use information effectively

General Education Skills Goal 4  
Ability to integrate different areas of knowledge and view ideas from multiple perspectives

Additional questions related to GVSU mission  
Compared with when you first started college, how would you describe your:  
Ability to shape your life  
Ability to shape your profession  
Ability to shape society

## **1F. Review other Units' Assessment Plans (Matrix)**

Skills and knowledge goals identified in the General Education program can be delivered in General Education courses, the major and electives, and co-curricular activities in addition to units such as the Writing Center and the Library. We need to understand, articulate, and

strengthen the relationship between General Education and these other units in our shared quest to achieve these the goals of the GE Program.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sampling plan – Census of all academic and service unit assessment plans

Frequency – Fall 2006. As the Assessment Plans are competed (1 year time lag between Assessment Plans filed by other units and inclusion in the GE Assessment Plan and subsequent reports). The Assessment Plan cycle is currently every three years beginning May 1, 2006.

Cost – Staff: GE-Assistant Director

Delivery – access Assessment Plans electronically

Student Learning Outcomes – Variable

Nationally normed – Variable

Value added – Variable

End product – Matrix of GE goals by other Units.

Note that while this is listed as an indirect measure (we’re creating a table), many other unit’s measures will be direct and can subsequently be incorporated into our Program Assessment (1B) as a direct measure.

GE GOAL	ACADEMIC OR SERVICE UNIT			
	ART	CAREER SERVICES	LIBRARY	ETC.
Written Comm.	Y	Y	Y	
Oral Comm.	N	Y	N	
Etc.				

### **1G. Aligning GE Goals with Best Practices**

The GE Program has knowledge and skills items that are variously called goals and objectives. The GES needs to re-examine these items in light of best practices. The AAC&U Self Study guide noted that a critical component in developing assessment plans when they suggested that general education programs answer the question of “How well do our goals and outcomes align with the growing national consensus about the important aims of college study?” We need to determine if we have the correct goals by looking at publications such as *Greater Expectations*, *Learning Reconsidered*, and others. If our goals are not in keeping with best practices, the GES will need to revise them, engage in a campus conversation about new or revised goals, and seek approval through faculty governance.

Sample – GES

Frequency – Reexamine goals to determine if they are appropriate – by Oct. 2006; review every 3 years

### **1H. Writing Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) for Skills Goals**

Once we have determined that our goals are well-aligned with best practices (1G), the GES needs to write student learning outcomes for the skills objectives (content objectives will be written at the subcategory level as described in 2E). The SLOs need to be disseminated to faculty for discussion. Once consensus is reached the SLOs need to be communicated to students and faculty (see 4A). In addition, faculty development activities will be needed to help faculty design their course to achieve the SLOs (see 5A).

Sample – GES

Frequency - Write SLO for all skills goals by Nov. 2007  
Disseminate to faculty, revise, and by Feb. 2007  
Review every 3 years

## **2. SUBCATEGORY AND CATEGORY**

The three categories in the GE Program are Foundations, Cultures, and Themes. Subcategories are the six subsets of Foundations, two subsets of Cultures, and 21 individual themes.

### **2A. Summing Course Measures**

At this time there are no direct measures at the category/subcategory level. The Direct measures at the course level when identified (2F) will be summed up by subcategory (i.e., Physical Science) and category (Foundations).

Frequency: anticipated first collection begins Fall 2007

### **2B. Review Standardized Tests**

There are a variety of standardized tests – direct measures – of selected General Education skills (i.e., Intercultural Development Inventory, Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency, Project SAILS) that may be useful to use. The GES will evaluate which, if any of the skills, they would like to assess using a standardized test.

Type of Measure – Direct

Sample Size – GES

Frequency – By Oct. 2006, recommend which, if any, standardized tests the GES would like to pilot. Tests must be identified by Oct. to make it into the budget request for 2007-08.

Cost – TBA

Delivery - TBA

Student Learning Outcomes – TBA

Nationally normed – Most will be.

Value added - TBA

## **2C. Faculty Survey – Objectives Audit**

The focus of the survey is to identify faculty perception of how well the skills and knowledge goals and objectives are met in a GE course.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Aggregate course measure 3B into Foundation, Cultures, and Theme subcategories (n=29).

Aggregate course measure 3B into Foundations, Cultures, and Theme categories (n=3).

## **2D. Student Survey – Objectives Audit**

The focus of the survey is to identify student perception of how well the skills and knowledge goals and objectives are met in a GE course.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Aggregate course measure 3C into Foundation, Cultures, and Theme subcategories (n=29)

Aggregate course indirect measure C into Foundations, Cultures, and Theme categories (n=3)

## **2E. Developing SLOs for Subcategories**

It is critical that we clearly articulate both the goals and the specific objectives of each of our subcategories. Indeed, AAC&U (Self Study) notes that one of the three main concepts institution’s need to do is developing “transparent, powerful goals and outcomes of learning.”

We need to convene faculty teaching in the subcategories to re-examine the goals, rewrite if necessary, write SLOs, disseminate to faculty for review, reach consensus, and publish them. These faculty groups will be known as General Education Coordinating Clusters (GECC).

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – variable from 5 to 44, most are 8 or less

Sample – GE Coordinating Clusters = one faculty member representing each course and 1 GES member

Frequency – Baseline - ½ meet in Fall 2006, ½ meet Winter 2007; thereafter, review every 2 years.

Cost – Food, copying

## **2F. Developing Embedded Assessment Measures**

According to AAC&U, “Course-embedded assignments provide the most valid evidence for all levels of analysis because they are closely aligned with faculty expectations and with the teaching learning process.” Once goals and student learning outcomes are identified and agreed upon, faculty can develop direct measures embedded at the course level to determine the level of student learning.

In some cases, the GE Coordinating Clusters might identify a common assessment measure that is used in all courses or all sections of a course in the subcategory while other times they might identify different assessment measures to be used in each course. The GECC will also develop a timeline for implementation. The GECC will report their proposed assessment measures and timeline to the GES for their approval.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – variable

Sample – GE Coordinating Clusters = one faculty member representing each course

Frequency – ½ meet in Winter 2007 (the ones that did SLO in Fall), ½ meet Fall 2007; thereafter, review every 2 years.

Cost – Food and copying

### 3. COURSE

#### 3A. None

At this time there are no direct measures at the course level. A necessary precursor to this is to refine the goals/objectives for each subcategory and turn them into SLOs (see 2E). Following identification of SLO, faculty GE Coordinating Clusters will identify ways to assess courses and/or subcategories through embedded assessments (2F). The Assessment Plan will be revised to include these direct measures.

Frequency: Anticipated start in Fall 2007.

#### 3B. Faculty Survey – Objectives Audit

The focus of the survey is to identify faculty perception of how well the skills and knowledge goals and objectives are met in GE. While it is true that perceptions may not equate with reality, it is important to quickly and easily determine what is happening in GE courses by subcategory and category. The survey takes little time to complete.

The survey assumes that there is a positive relationship between faculty saying the course achieves the goals and actual student learning. The converse is not likely to be true – i.e., if faculty say they are not doing writing, it is unlikely the students are doing writing – so the bias is overestimating perceived success at meeting the goal.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – variable

Sample – all courses in ½ of the categories, voluntary survey, instructors teaching multiple sections will receive only one survey.

Frequency – Baseline – ½ of categories at the end of Fall 2006; repeat for the other ½ of categories Winter 2007. Repeat in 2007 will be based on the new SLO established during Fall 2006/Winter 2007. Thereafter, repeat every two years.

Cost – \$0 if Blackboard, scantrons otherwise

Staff – GE Assistant Director

Delivery – Blackboard or in-class

Student Learning Outcomes – all GE skills and content objectives

Nationally normed – No

Value added – No

Reporting – summed up to Subcategory and Category.

Faculty and student survey contents:

How well does this course achieve the following goals: High, Medium, Low, Not at all (or Very Well, Well, Poorly, Very Poorly, Not at All; or Excellent, Good, Satisfactory, Fair, Poor)

Identifying information about the course will be optional: section size, comments.

If a course counts simultaneously in two categories, the respondent will receive only one survey with both category objectives.

Objectives to be asked are:

All Foundations

- 1. To engage in articulate expression through effective writing.*
- 2. To engage in articulate expression through effective speaking.*
- 3. To think critically and creatively.*
- 4. To locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.*
- 5. The tradition of humane inquiry that informs moral and ethical choices.*
- 6. Variable number of objectives for the Foundations category.*

All Cultures

- 1. To engage in articulate expression through effective writing.*
- 2. To engage in articulate expression through effective speaking.*
- 3. To think critically and creatively.*
- 4. To locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.*
- 5. The tradition of humane inquiry that informs moral and ethical choices.*
- 6. Variable number of objectives for the Cultures category.*

All Themes

- 1. To engage in articulate expression through effective writing.*
- 2. To engage in articulate expression through effective speaking.*
- 3. To think critically and creatively.*
- 4. To locate, evaluate, and use information effectively.*
- 5. To integrate different areas of knowledge and view ideas from multiple perspectives.*
- 6. The tradition of humane inquiry that informs moral and ethical choices.*
- 7. Variable number of objectives for each Theme.*

Results – can be used to identify category/subcategories where GE skills objectives are being focused on and ones where there is less focus. Results cycle back to faculty about reminding/articulating to students when they are focusing on certain skills or more faculty development in how to achieve the objectives.

### 3C. Student Survey – Objectives Audit

The focus of the survey is to identify student perception of how well the skills and knowledge goals and objectives are being met in GE. While it is true that perceptions may not equate with reality, it is important to quickly and easily determine what is happening in GE courses by subcategory and category. The surveys take little time to complete.

The survey assumes that there is a positive relationship between students saying the course achieves the goals and actual student learning. The converse is not likely to be true – i.e., if students say they are not doing writing, it is unlikely the students are doing writing – so the bias is overestimating perceived success at meeting the goal.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – variable

Sample – all courses in ½ of the categories, voluntary survey

Frequency – Same as used in the Faculty survey.

Cost – \$0 if Blackboard, scantrons otherwise

Staff – GE Assistant Director to process

Delivery – Blackboard or in-class

Student Learning Outcomes – all GE skills and content objectives

Nationally normed – No

Value added – No

Reporting – summed up to Subcategory and Category.

Results – can be used to identify category/subcategories where GE skills objectives are being focused on and ones where there is less focus. Results cycle back to faculty about reminding/articulating to students when they are focusing on certain skills or more faculty development in how to achieve the objectives.

## 4. STUDENT GOALS

### 4A. Promote Student Understanding of the Value of GE

1. Consolidate the handbook and articulate the value of GE  
Consolidate faculty and student handbook into one publication.  
Include objectives for each category in the handbook.  
Include GVSU mission and how GE ties into it.  
Include statements from students, alumni, and employers.

Frequency – winter 2006 and updated annually.

2. Develop a video articulating the value of GE  
How GE helps accomplish the GVSU mission.  
Statements from alumni, faculty, employers, and students on the value of GE.

Frequency – winter 2006 and updated as needed.

3. Develop a cover sheet for each GE course and “boiler-plate” language to show how GE fits into the mission of GVSU, and how the course fits into the category objectives. Encourage faculty to attach the sheet to the front of their syllabus.

Sample – census of all courses in GE

Frequency – every term

Delivery – email

Student Learning Outcomes – communication of all SLO

### 4B. Ensure Academic Rigor in GE Courses

- a. Analyze mean and distribution of grades in GE compared to other courses.
- b. Communicate the message of academic rigor to faculty and faculty during faculty/staff Orientation.
- c. Communicate the message of academic rigor to students during Orientation.

Frequency:

- a. STA 319 project for Fall 2006. Results cycle back to GES and faculty, staff and student Orientation.
- b. Start Fall 2006 and continue for every Orientation.
- c. Start Winter 2006 and continue for every Orientation.

#### **4C. Increase Involvement by Students in Courses in the GE Program**

Identify courses where students can develop projects to either publicize, communicate, market, or assess direct and indirect measures related to the GE Program. Two STA 319 projects were done in Winter 06.

Frequency: Develop at least one STA 319 project for Fall 06. Develop one marketing or public relations or advertising project for Fall 06/Winter 07 (i.e., value of GE, understanding of GE).

### **5. FACULTY**

#### **5A. GE Faculty Development**

Offer training to faculty in how to write SLOs, design activities to achieve them, develop assessment measures, and develop rubrics to achieve them.

Frequency – starting Spring 2006

Cost – \$25,000 (summer stipend, food, supplies)

Delivery – One or two day workshops

Student Learning Outcomes – Variable, can be GE knowledge or skills objectives.

Assessment - At all GE sponsored training activities, collect syllabi pre and post-training to determine whether the training yielded changes in the course design as evidenced by the syllabus.

#### **5B. Promote Faculty Understanding of the Value of General Education**

Develop a cover sheet for each GE course and “boiler-plate” language to show how GE fits into the mission of GVSU, and how the course fits into the category objectives.

Sample Size – Faculty teaching General Education

Sample – census

Frequency – every term

Delivery – email

Student Learning Outcomes – communication of all SLO

Assessment - review 1/3 courses beginning Winter 07, 1/3 in Fall 07, and 1/3 in Winter 08.  
Compare syllabus pre and post dissemination of the boiler-plate language

### **5C. Identify and Communicate Best Practices in Teaching General Education**

Develop a link on the GE website entitled Faculty Resources. Put model syllabi, course change documents, SLO, activities to achieve SLO, rubrics, and other material. Faculty will also be asked at training sessions what items they'd like on the website.

Frequency: Initial documents Fall 2006.

Assessment: Put counters on the website to determine which documents are the most accessed.

### **5D. Faculty Orientation**

Develop a workshop offered at multiple times for new and continuing tenure track and adjuncts designed to communicate the value of GE and the expectations of faculty teaching these courses. Ask to be included in new Adjunct and Faculty Orientation.

Frequency: At least two workshops each fall, one each winter.

Assessment: Faculty evaluation of the value of the workshop. Percent of new faculty who attend the workshop.

### **5E. Faculty Survey of Student Engagement - FSSE**

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – 53% of the faculty in 2005

Sample – Census of faculty

Frequency – Winter 2005, 2007, 2009 (likely to be less frequent than this)

Cost –The costs of FSSE are in the Institutional Analysis budget.

Staff: GE-Assistant Director to link NSSE data to GE goals.

Delivery – electronic, administered by GVSU Institutional Analysis

Student Learning Outcomes: Specific questions that relate to GE:

“To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas (very much, quite a bit, some, very little):

- Acquiring a broad general education
- Writing clearly and effectively
- Speaking clearly and effectively
- Thinking critically and analytically
- Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds
- Developing a personal code of values and ethics

Individual questions are summed into five categories:

1. Level of academic challenge
2. Active and collaborative learning
3. Student-faculty interaction
4. Enriching educational experiences
5. Supportive campus environment

Nationally normed – Yes

Value added – Yes

Specific to GE – No

## **5F. Promote Co-Curricular Activities to Increase Student Engagement**

*Learning Reconsidered* explains the benefits of closely coupling co-curricular activities with classes. Appropriate co-curricular activities will be identified and disseminated to faculty teaching GE courses on a regular basis. The GE Director will continue to work with Student Affairs for assistance in identifying appropriate co-curricular events for GE courses.

Sample – courses in GE categories as appropriate

Frequency – Fall 2005, as activities are identified that are appropriate.

Cost – GE - COT

Delivery – Email

Student Learning Outcomes – Variable

Assessment – follow-up survey to determine if faculty that were emailed announced any activities in class and how they used it in class.

## **6. PROGRAM ADMINISTRATION**

### **6A. Improve Scheduling of GE Courses**

Analyze the delivery of the courses including class size, instructor level, percent full, distribution of students in each class, availability of night courses, and availability of classes at regional campuses. These data will be communicated to Deans and Unit heads to improve scheduling.

Frequency: Fall 2006, annually

### **6B. Disseminate Current Information about GE Changes**

- a. Update the website within 3 days of a Special Topics course being approved.
- b. Update the website within 3 days of a course approved for GE credit.
- c. Publicize the GE website on all GE publications and mail.

Frequency: Winter 06, ongoing

### **6C. Incorporate GE in Institutional Marketing Documents.**

Meet with Institutional Marketing to ensure that appropriate GVSU publications reference the GE Program as a way to achieve the Liberal Education mission of the university.

Frequency: Summer 2006

### **6D. Review or Develop GE Policies**

1. How to get a new course into a Theme.
2. Procedure for the second year review of pilot courses in Foundations.
3. Procedure for approving one-time Special Topics courses for Themes and Diversity.
4. Policy regarding the number of Theme courses students can transfer in from other colleges.
5. Policy for approving Honors courses.
6. Policy of ART, CTH, and MUS students completing their Foundation course by a course offered at a higher level (they do not have the equivalent to Chemistry Foundation courses for majors and ones for nonmajors).
7. Departmental proficiency exam as an alternative to a Foundation course.

Frequency: GES to develop a timeline for developing or revising policies in Fall 2006. Work groups are formed to develop or revise policies.

### **6E. Analyze Low-Enrolling Themes.**

Three themes have few students and few classes which creates difficulties for units in obtaining enough students to successfully run the course. Course cancellations cause problems for students in that Theme. The three lowest enrolling Themes will be analyzed by the GES in consultation with faculty in those Themes to determine whether to retain, modify, merge, or eliminate any of the Themes.

Frequency: GED will provide GES with data about low-enrolling Themes. GES forms working groups to evaluate the Themes in Fall 2006.

### **6F. Employer Survey**

Design a survey or modify another unit's survey to determine employers' opinion about the knowledge, skills and attitudes they desire in employees. Also, ask their opinion about how GVSU students perform with respect to the GE knowledge and skills.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – variable

Sample – random sample of employers

Frequency – Every 3 years, starting fall 2008

Cost – printing and mailing

Delivery – mail

Student Learning Outcomes –variable

### **6G. Alumni Survey**

Design a survey or modify another unit's survey to determine alumni opinion about the value of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they achieved through their GE courses.

Type of Measure – Indirect

Sample Size – variable

Sample – random sample of alumni

Frequency – Every 3 years, starting fall 2008

Cost – printing and mailing

Delivery – mail

Student Learning Outcomes –variable

#### **6H. Determine if the GES is the Appropriate Model for University Governance.**

The GES is a subcommittee of the University Curriculum Committee. As a result of Strategic Planning, the GES will explore whether other models of faculty governance are more appropriate given that its purview can and does extend beyond curriculum review. The GES will create a working group to determine whether they want to retain the existing governance structure or to adopt a new one.

Frequency – Fall 2006

#### **K. BUDGET IMPLICATIONS**

We need an effective, efficient, and equitable distribution of work between faculty and administration. Data collection, management, and analysis of many of the assessment activities is most logically done at the administrative level, while the evaluation of the results and changes to the program are most appropriate for faculty to take the lead on.

To be successful at assessment, the General Education Program will require a significant investment of new resources. Some of these resources, while they do not have a direct cost, do in fact, have a real cost. Most notably is faculty time. Improving teaching and learning in GE courses come at the cost of faculty meeting to develop student learning outcomes, attending workshops, reorganizing their course, developing rubrics, or reporting results to the GES. These hidden costs must not be ignored. Faculty must receive appropriate recognition for their efforts from their colleagues, unit (or equivalent) head, dean or director, and the Provost.

The NCA Accreditation Team during their last visit in 1999 noted the following resource-related challenges. “The previous, “cafeteria-style” program was easy to schedule, for both faculty and students. The new program, with greater structure, could present scheduling problems. Development, implementation and monitoring of the thematic clusters will be a big job, and plans are in place to address the task. The role of the program coordinator may need to be expanded to address the expanded program. The potential exists, which the committee supports, for the program to increase interdisciplinary academic coordination with the deans and faculty

throughout the university.” In light of this, it should be noted that few additional resources have been allocated to the administration of GE since the last NCA Accreditation Team visit.

### **Expected Results**

Additional resources devoted to the General Education Program can benefit the university in the following ways:

- increased academic rigor of GE courses
- increased understanding of and support for a liberal education and the GE Program
- increased faculty, staff, and administrative support for the value of the GE Program
- increased faculty development can lead to higher levels of student engagement in all courses
- increased understanding of requirements and better scheduling can decrease time to graduation
- faculty can be expected to apply the methods and techniques they’ve learned to other courses thereby helping develop the culture of assessment beyond GE.

### **Additional Assessment Resources Needed**

1. Courses – GE Director will continue to work with units to target additional or fewer courses or sections where appropriate (this may involve shifting resources between departments or colleges).
2. FTLC - We support allocating more resources to FTLC to do additional faculty development. They are the recognized experts on campus when it comes to delivering faculty workshops in most areas of interest to GE.
3. GE Program

Additional resources are needed immediately to do many of the assessment activities listed in this plan. These resources should be a part of the GE base budget.

- Full time AP
- Full time COT
- Money for training

**General Education Program  
Strategic Plan  
2006-2009 Action Plan**

<b>Goal I: Strengthen awareness of and support for General Education among students, faculty, staff and administration.</b>		
<b>Strategies/Action Steps</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>GE Assessment Plan</b>
<p><b>1.</b> Articulate the role of the General Education Program in the University community</p> <p><b>A.</b> Clarify the General Education Program’s unique niche within GVSU, including defining its relationship to GVSU’s Claiming a Liberal Education initiative, LIB 100, Basic Skills and Supplemental Writing Skills classes, the library’s information literacy program, and other campus-wide resources.<sup>1</sup></p>	Fall 06→	1B, 6C
<p><b>2.</b> Market the General Education program to students, faculty, staff and administration.<sup>2</sup></p> <p><b>A.</b> Create a brand identity for General Education, including consideration of re-naming.</p> <p><b>B.</b> Survey employers of GVSU graduates about why they value a general education in their workers. Use the information gathered</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. To market General Education to students, faculty, staff and administration</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b. For continuous improvement of the General Education Program</p> <p><b>C.</b> Develop key messages that effectively position the General Education Program within GVSU (including setting appropriate expectations for courses)</p>	A=F 06 B=F 08 C=W 06	A=4A B=1G, 6C, 6G C=4B, 5C, 6C

Strategies/Action Steps	Time Frame	GE Assessment Plan
<p>3. Develop a General Education communication strategy to foster invigorating dialog and raise the visibility of General Education across campus</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Use multiple media/channels to reinforce General Education messages and inform students, faculty, staff and administration (especially recruitment, advising, orientation, and marketing staff as well as GE faculty).</li> <li>B. Sponsor or co-sponsor a General Education speaker series (e.g., invite employers identified in the employers survey to campus to speak about the value of General Education)<sup>3</sup></li> <li>C. Publicize co-curricular activities targeted to students by Theme; co-sponsor /help build an audience for appropriate activities and events<sup>4</sup></li> <li>D. Provide a means for students to showcase their work (e.g., a General Education track in Scholarship Day, presentations to transfers or new Freshmen, etc.)<sup>5</sup></li> </ul>	<p>A=F 06 B=F 07 C=W 06 D=W 07</p>	<p>A=4A, 5B, 5D B=6F C=6F D=4C</p>
<p>4. Explore the feasibility of restructuring the General Education Program governance to raise its stature and influence at GVSU</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Review General Education governance at other universities</li> <li>B. Explore the process by which other programs at GVSU enhanced their status (e.g., Graduate Council)</li> </ul>	<p>F 06</p>	<p>6I</p>

## Goal II: Ensure optimal General Education Program design and implementation.

Strategies/Action Steps	Time Frame	GE Assessment Plan
<p>1. Review the General Education Program goals, requirements and scope for appropriateness, comprehensiveness and alignment with best practices.</p> <p>A. Review General Education literature and practice as a benchmark for reviewing present program</p> <p>B. Conduct a survey (i.e., employer, alumni)</p> <p>C. Revise program goals according to agreed-upon benchmark</p> <p>D. Analyze and revise program requirements for alignment with program goals</p>	<p>A=F 06 B=F 08 C=F 06 D=F 06</p>	<p>A=1G B=1G, 2C, 2D, 3B, 3C C=1C D=1G</p>
<p>2. Review the implementation of the General Education program</p> <p>A. Review credit distribution for alignment with program goals and balance<sup>6</sup></p> <p>B. Analyze present Themes for alignment with program goals and comprehensiveness</p> <p>C. Review and clarify if necessary the process and roles for monitoring the General Education Program, identifying issues, and making changes/adjustments in a timely fashion.</p>	<p>A=F 06 B=F 06 C=F 06</p>	<p>A=1G B=1G, 6E C=6D</p>

## Goal III: Ensure program quality through assessment and continuous improvement.

Strategies/Action Steps	Time Frame	GE Assessment Plan
<p>1. Draft assessment plan to address:</p> <p>A. An ongoing method(s) for gaining a better understanding of the impact of the General Education Program, e.g., Is the Program achieving its stated goals?</p> <p>B. An ongoing process for employing assessment to improve teaching and learning in the Program.</p>	<p>W 06</p>	<p>1A-H 2A-F 3A-C</p>
<p>2. Implement assessment process.</p>	<p>W 06</p>	<p>All</p>

## Goal IV: Ensure excellence in General Education Program teaching and learning.

Strategies/Action Steps	Time Frame	GE Assessment Plan
<p>Engage faculty in dialogue and learning about expectations and best practices in General Education teaching and learning (see NSSE and FSSE data)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Include General Education in new faculty and adjunct faculty orientations</li> <li>B. Develop a General Education orientation and ongoing series of learning opportunities/General Education faculty meetings<sup>7</sup></li> <li>C. Develop and implement General Education faculty peer groups</li> <li>D. Develop and implement a plan for communicating expectations and learning opportunities to General Education faculty</li> </ul>	F 06	A=5D B=5A C=2E D=5B

<sup>1</sup> Discussion points included:

- LS100 – consider requiring this for all students and use the course to strengthen awareness of the value of General Education. At present, 50 percent of GVSU students take this course.
- GES may seek input from Institutional Marketing, Advising, and other GVSU groups in developing these strategies.

<sup>2</sup> The thrust of marketing to students should be to energize them and mobilize them to consider General Education as vital to their college education, as well as setting appropriate expectations for the intellectual rigor required in General Education courses.

<sup>3</sup> It was noted that the Themes had a small, one time fund for sponsoring speakers, a conference, publicity, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Using a Chautauqua model was also discussed here.

<sup>5</sup> Emphasis for student presentations should be on demonstrating how the student integrated the knowledge s/he gained in multiple courses across a Theme.

<sup>6</sup> Emphasis was placed on the importance of considering distribution in terms of both range of course offerings and balance of participation by students. Is the program intentional about the intellectual scope and comprehensiveness of the offering – or are there subject area/topic gaps that need to be addressed (e.g., is the offering Eurocentric?)

<sup>7</sup> Ideas discussed included hosting an orientation for all General Education faculty before the semester starts; holding faculty meetings throughout the term, some in the day and others in the evening; and emphasizing that all General Education faculty are expected to participate.