
UPEC General Education Assessment Review June, 2009

Report to the Faculty

UPEC, 2008-2009

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Methodology and Summary Findings

During the 2008 – 2009 academic year UPEC undertook an assessment of the general education program. While the work was aimed at the totality of the program, common *and* exploratory curriculum, the emphasis was on the exploratory portion of general education.

The purpose of this review was three-fold:

- The common curriculum was implemented in 1998 after much thought and planning. While assessment and some revisions have occurred since its beginning little effort has been given to assessing the totality of the program. Furthermore, at the time faculty instituted the common curriculum the exploratory curriculum was left virtually untouched. While we have had difficulty identifying the last time the exploratory curriculum was fully reviewed many believe it was in the late 1970's or early 1980's. Needless to say, an assessment of the exploratory curriculum was long overdue.
- It is expected, according to the NWCCU standards, that there be criteria for general education courses. During the self-study we identified that our general education program is lacking in criteria for courses to be included in the curriculum. Moreover, in accordance with current assessment practices, the general education program also lacks specific learning objectives, and this should be remedied.
- In addition to the length of time since its last formal review, there were increasing questions as to whether the current curriculum is appropriate and adequate for the new millennium. It is important to note that the review was undertaken with the belief that it was time to embark on such a task, yet with no particular agenda in mind. UPEC did not have a goal of what the general education should be when it began the assessment; instead, UPEC felt its responsibility was to review and assess the state of the current program. While during its deliberations UPEC had many conversations about what a revised program may include, the recommendations only provide a possible direction based on the data and do not recommend a particular program.

Process and Methodology

In the 2007-08 school year it was on UPEC's schedule to review the general education curriculum, as it does with all undergraduate programs. As conversations evolved it was evident a significant review of the program was long overdue. During Spring Quarter, 2008, it was agreed that in 2008-09 UPEC's normally scheduled departmental reviews would be suspended and, in their place, a comprehensive review of the general education review would commence. UPEC appointed a steering committee to work during the summer (2008) to map out a process and timeline for a general education assessment.

By the beginning of fall, 2008, the committee presented to UPEC for approval both a timeline for the assessment and a revision of general education (Appendix A) as well as a plan for its assessment. The assessment was conducted using the following instruments:

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- Appendix B: Faculty survey - a modified version of the *Assessing General Education* faculty survey (published by the American Association of Colleges and University)
 - Appendix C: Student focus groups - conducted in January and February, 2009 by faculty members of UPEC
 - Appendix D: Review of all teaching evaluations for general education courses for 2004/5 – 2007/8
 - Appendix E: Review D, F (grades) or Withdrawl for all general education courses for 2004/5-2007/8
 - Appendix F: Senior Capstones – review of general-education-specific questions asked of this year’s seniors
 - Appendix G: Current proficiencies (math, writing and foreign language) –review and assessment by relevant departments
 - Appendix H: Review of concerns from SAS (Student Academic Services)
 - Appendix I: UPEC’s Goals for the Exploratory Curriculum

Following a thorough review and thoughtful discussion UPEC approved the following charge to a General Education Steering Committee:

UPEC charges the general Education Taskforce to design a general education that resonates with the University’s mission statement: Graduating people of competence and character who will engage the culture and change the world. Essential to this work is to create a clear set of criteria that courses must meet for inclusion into the Exploratory Curriculum.

To accomplish this UPEC recommends, based on the year-long assessment process, that the General Education Steering Committee consider the following recommendations:

1. Identify a model of general education that:
 - a. Is relevant to the University’s mission statement;
 - b. Enables students to understand the virtues and benefits of the liberal arts;
 - c. Provides a more thematic approach rather than a "cafeteria" model;
 - d. Creates a balance between specificity and flexibility.
2. Identify a general education program that considers the totality of the undergraduate experience such that:
 - a. There is reasonable distribution between general education (common, exploratory curriculum and competencies), electives and the major courses;
 - b. It provides the necessary number of credits to assure a foundational general education experience but is not overly burdensome in its expectations.
3. Assure the curriculum is developmentally appropriate:
 - a. To consider whether the freshman year should be more focused on developing skills necessary for success in college (writing, speaking, critical thinking, information literacy) though grounded in substantive courses;

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- b. To assure there is an appropriate balance of general education courses at all levels, but especially at the 1000 and 2000 levels;
 - c. To review the developmental appropriateness of the common curriculum courses;
 - d. To assure attention is given to the transfer students.

Appendix A: General Education Review Timeline

2008-2009 Academic Year

Fall 2008

- Data Collection
 - Faculty Perception survey (October '08)
 - Review of proficiencies by relevant departments (Mathematics, Foreign Languages, English)(early November)
 - Review of teaching evaluations (Early November)
 - Departmental perception reviews
 - Student Focus groups
 - Capstone papers
 - Available assessments of past general education courses

Winter 2009

- Continue data collection – senior capstone papers
- Assessment of collected data

Spring 2009

- Presentation of Assessment data
 - Presentation to individual schools
 - Presentation to all undergraduate faculty
- Identify and appoint General Education taskforce
- Utilize Faculty in-service for general education assessment presentation & discussion??

Summer 2009

- General Education Institute for Taskforce, Steering Committee, Dean's Cabinet
- General Education Taskforce considers options

2009-2010 Academic Year

Fall 2009

- General Education taskforce create plan

Winter 2010

- Taskforce presents plan

Spring 2010

- Plan presented to Faculty Senate for vote

2010-2011 Academic Year

- Planning and course preparation for new general education program
- Catalog copy due by end of Fall Quarter

2011 Implementation of new general education program

Appendix B: Results of Faculty Survey

The general education faculty survey was conducted in Fall Quarter, 2008. It was distributed to full time faculty who were at least in their second year at SPU and who teach at least part time in the undergraduate program. The survey had a response rate of 80%. The instrument was a modified version of the *Assessing General Education* faculty survey published by the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

The survey covered the faculty perspective on general education from five distinct vantages: (1) the current general education program as a whole, (2) content of the current curriculum; (3) student experience; (4) experience in teaching in the program; and (5) future direction of the program based on current models found in general education.

In summary, the faculty are divided on the goals for general education with some perceiving the goals as being explicit while others seeing general education as a list of courses with little focus. Moreover, a significant proportion of the faculty sees general education as fragmented and lacking in coherence. Even with these perspectives a majority of faculty indicate they have a good understanding of the purpose and rationale of the curriculum. Also, more than half of the faculty believe that students experience the curriculum as an obstacle standing in the way of major courses.

As faculty conceptualize the current general education program they do not see that it aligns with any one of the major models typically found in such curriculums. For example, the Great Books model, the Scholarly Discipline model, (a program perceived as more of an introduction to the discipline), or the Engaged Citizen model, (one that aims at developing students who will shape the future). Yet, when asked which model best fits the mission statement an overwhelming number of faculty (84%) believe that model would be the Engaged Citizen while a majority (60%) believe this model to be the best for Seattle Pacific.

- The faculty's perspective on the current general education program:
 - Nearly half of the faculty (47%) perceives the purpose of the general education program is explicit and reflects the central educational values of the institution, yet 47% believe the goals are expressed as a list of courses to be taken rather than as a list of goals focused on student learning and development;
 - With regards to coherence, 46% of faculty perceives the general education program to be fragmented while 20% consider it to be a coherent and integrated program that emphasis the acquisition of intellectual and communicative skills, with a focus on character formation and spiritual development;
 - In terms of curricular balance, 36% report the undergraduate program increasingly lacks balance as students take primarily general education and major courses with little opportunity for electives;

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- Fifty-four percent of the faculty believe the current general education curriculum is grounded in the University mission.
 - The faculty's perspective on the content of the curriculum:
 - Seventy-six percent of the faculty perceive that the curriculum includes political, moral and ethical dimensions;
 - Forty-three percent believe it provides a global perspective;
 - The responses to questions about whether the curriculum provides the foundation for disciplinary courses and whether it provides a multicultural perspective are in a typical bell-shaped distribution.
 - Faculty perspective of the student experience:
 - Fifty-five percent of faculty believe that our students regard the general education requirements as an obstruction that stands in the way of taking courses in their major, while 13% believe that our general education program is perceived as a 'selling' point for prospective students;
 - Only 8% of our faculty feel very strongly (and a total of 36% feel strongly/very strongly) that students gain a good understanding of the rationale of general education through activities such as orientation, USEM and meeting with their advisors);
 - Between 35% and 40% of faculty selected the 'neutral' response for questions regarding how responsive faculty are to students' differences (such as student perspectives, student preparation, learning styles) and as to the preparation of transfer students to succeed in general education;
 - With regards to transfer students, 56% of the faculty believe they lack a comprehensive understanding of the role of general education in the undergraduate degree program.
 - Faculty Experience in the general education program:
 - A significant number of faculty (65%) report they have a good understanding of the purpose and rationale for the general education curriculum;
 - Sixty-six percent of faculty see teaching in the general education program as an 'opportunity' to look for new ways as to how their discipline can 'illuminate the problems and questions of our common life' while only 10% see teaching gen ed as a chore;
 - Thirty-nine percent report that faculty development for general education is minimal.
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- In the survey, faculty were asked to reflect on the three primary models found for general education (Great Books, Scholarly Discipline and Engaged Citizen) and their relationship to general education at SPU
 - Faculty were asked which of the three models our program is most aligned, and the responses were evenly distributed with 34% for Great Books, 32% with Scholarly Discipline and 34% with Engaged Citizen;
 - When asked which model was best for SPU, 60% indicated the Engaged Citizen model;
 - When asked which best fits our mission statement, 84% indicated it was the Engaged Citizen model.

Appendix C: Results of Student Focus Groups

During February 2009 four members of UPEC conducted student focus groups for the purpose of learning about students' experience with their general education course work. Specifically, students who participated were asked about their learning experiences with the Common and Exploratory Curricula and the competencies in Math, Writing, and Foreign Language.

Method

Department chairs were asked via email if they could suggest names of students in their junior or senior years who they thought would be willing to talk with members of UPEC about general education. Based on chair suggestions, students were invited directly by email to participate in a one-hour group interview. As an incentive, each participant received a \$10 gift coffee card to *The Grinder* and were automatically eligible for a drawing to win a \$100 gift card to *Barnes and Noble*. Dates were selected by the four UPEC interviewers and students were invited to sign up for the date they preferred. Twenty-two students representing fifteen majors agreed to participate; they were asked to review their academic degree checklist before attending their focus group. Each interview was scheduled from 5-6 PM and took place in the Library Conference rooms. Students agreed to be audio taped for note-taking accuracy. The following four questions were asked in each focus group:

1. What does it mean for you to be well educated for the 21st Century?
2. Summarize your General Education experience. How does it connect to the rest of your education, as in your major?
3. Has the current General Education Program helped to prepare you for the 21st Century?
4. Has the current General Education Program assisted you in your faith development?

Results

Question #1. What does it mean for you to be well educated for the 21st Century?

Students had similar responses for what it means to be well educated for the 21st Century: writing skills, basic math skills, effective communication, broad scientific understanding, ability to read research, knowledge of history and current events, global/cultural understanding.

Question #2. Summarize your General Education experience. How does it connect to the rest of your education, as in your major?

Students seemed to have difficulty summarizing their general education experience and were uncertain as to how some of the courses connected to their lives. "I just took classes to fulfill SPU requirements"; "The Exploratory courses seemed like more of high school—it extended it a bit, but they didn't relate to my future"

Most of the discussions centered on the Common Curriculum and what worked for them and what did not. "UCOR 3000 and UFDN 2000/3100 were the courses where I learned the most; how to formulate an argument and back up my claims in writing, and how to articulate my

beliefs.” “I didn’t understand the whole concept of the Common Curriculum until UFDN 3100.” Students were uncertain about the purpose of UCOR 1000, as they generally felt that the course did not prepare them for the subsequent sequence of courses. They claimed it was either “too easy” or “too hard” and that there was a lack of consistency among the UCOR 1000 professors. The same concern was raised about the USEMs: “USEM courses are dumbed down in some cases and others have a more demanding work load.”

Students also thought that Common Curriculum credits could be reduced. UFDN courses could be combined, specifically UFDN 1000 and 3100, “combined into one, more substantive course.” The majority of students thought that UCOR 2000 could be in the Exploratory Curriculum as one way of reducing the credit load, but a few thought that UCOR 2000 was the only class of the Common Curriculum that engaged other cultures and societies. In addition to a discussion about the quantity of credits, students raised concerns about the quality of teaching in the general education program. “Some UCOR/UFDN instructors don’t like teaching the course (some even say so at the beginning), and it shows....” “With respect to Exploratory courses, some profs seem to dislike teaching....” “I’ve had several bad adjunct professors and they seemed to dislike teaching.”

There was consensus on the courses that had the most favorable impact in the Common Curriculum: UCOR 3000 and UFDN 2000 and 3100. Their main complaint was that the size of the classes was too large and there was not enough opportunity for exploration, discussion, or debate. One comment summarized much of this sentiment: “It wasn’t until I was in my major that I had a safe place to talk about beliefs and social issues; general education should teach us how to discuss, question and still be respectful.”

Question #3. Has the current General Education Program helped to prepare you for the 21st Century?

When asked if the general education program prepared them for the 21st Century, students seemed to focus on skills and competencies. They wanted more writing classes, more “practical” math courses, more public speaking opportunities, and more cultural/global engagement rather than a “separate, one-year” foreign language requirement. “Could we tie language instruction with community-based service opportunities or study abroad?” In general, students felt more prepared for the 21st Century by their major program than the general education program. They were unanimous about reducing the credits in the Common Curriculum and wanting more options for non majors in the Exploratory Curriculum, for “personal enhancement.”

Question #4. Has the current General Education Program assisted you in your faith development?

Students felt their faith was developed in UCOR 3000 and UFDN courses, especially UFDN 2000 and 3100. Others also thought that their faith was developed in some of their Exploratory courses and in their major. Several students opined that faith-integration in courses should be “a natural extension of the subject” and “not forced because it is a Christian university.” A few students had negative experiences with the professors who taught their UCOR and UFDN

courses, claiming that some professors were not open-minded and “pushed” their views; most however, had positive experiences with their UCOR and UFDN professors and believed their faith was “shaped” in those courses and they learned how to think and articulate their faith.

Summary/Recommendations

- Students would like to see fewer courses in the Common Curriculum, perhaps by combining UFDN 1000 and 3100. Students do not perceive consistency in USEM and UCOR 1000 instruction, nor do they perceive the latter as foundational to the sequence.
- Students would like to see higher quality instruction in general education; faculty who teach in the program need to be strongly committed to it.
- Students would like to see smaller classes for Common Curriculum courses, as it is difficult to have discussion and debate with current class sizes.
- Students would like more assistance and experience in their basic competencies—writing, public speaking/argumentation, (“general education should teach us how to discuss and question...”) and foundational mathematics. Moreover, students think the foreign language requirement does not meet the need for cultural and global awareness. They suggested linking the requirement to study abroad or community-based service.
- Students believe that their faith was developed and challenged in UCOR 3000 and in UFDN 2000 and 3100. They also believe their individual major programs have enhanced their faith.

Appendix D: Review of Teaching Evaluations

Teaching evaluations for all general education courses were reviewed for a four-year time period (2004/5 through 2007/8). The review includes *all* general education courses for all years. While we are aware that response rates for teaching evaluations are not always sufficient for a comprehensive analysis and that rates vary widely, teaching evaluations are included in this assessment as they do provide an important piece of information and observations of these data are made with this fact in mind.

Following are observations of the review of the evaluations:

- For the most part, overall teaching evaluations for general education are mildly positive, with most courses having an average rating for all categories of 3.8, and many categories above 4 or above.
- With few exceptions, adjuncts generally received lower scores, and sometimes rather substantially lower ones, than did full-time faculty.

For the Common Curriculum:

- UCOR 1000 had the greatest variability in scores, ranging from a low of 1.93 to a high of 3.99. While many have been long suspicious of a lack of success in UCOR 1000 it is important to realize that the distribution of teaching evaluations for this course are bi-modal, with evaluations being either below 2.8 or above 3.5.
- UCOR 2000 teaching evaluations have remained fairly consistent in the high 3's.
- UCOR 3000 teaching evaluation scores have experienced positive growth over the past four years, exceeding the 4.0 mark for the last two.
- USEM 1000 teaching evaluations have remained constant, just slightly above 4.0 for each of the years reviewed.
- The UFDN program has instituted a different teaching evaluation protocol and, for the most part, data for these courses are not included in this report. However, the School of Theology is currently engaged in a rigorous, on-going assessment of these courses and these findings will be included in the Taskforce's discussions.

For the Exploratory Curriculum:

- The averages for the majority of courses are in the high-3's with a number of courses in the 4's.
- Focusing on the 1000 and 2000 level courses, where most of the exploratory curriculum is taught, course evaluations are higher for the 1000-level arts and humanities courses as well as the Social Science "B" category, while a reversed trend is observed for the Natural and Biological Science, Math and the Social Science "A" courses. It is likely, that for the NSA category, that evaluations are higher in the 2000 level courses as these are more focused on the pre-health science students. While a variety of reasons likely exist to explain this trend it is observed that these courses generally have larger sections than those receiving the higher teaching evaluations in other categories.

- Courses in the Math category are generally lowest, though with this curriculum being revamped it is expected these issues will be addressed. Interestingly, it does appear that, in general, math courses taught in-discipline received higher teach evaluations.

	All years	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
UCOR 1000	3.23	2.97	3.29	3.31	2.90
UCOR 2000	3.75	3.46	4.03	3.76	3.86
UCOR 3000	3.99	3.92	3.84	4.07	4.15
UFDN 1000	3.67	N/A	N/A	N/A	3.67
UFDN 2000	4.08	N/A	N/A	N/A	4.08
UFDN 3000	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
UFDN 3100	3.86	N/A	N/A	3.64	3.96
USEM	4.04	4.02	4.07	4.03	4.04

Exploratory Curriculum - Teaching Evaluation Summary

	1000	2000	3000	4000
AHA	4.15	4.05	4.00	3.86
AHB	4.27	4.15	4.30	3.97
Math	3.24	3.54	N/A	4.04
NSA	3.62	4.11	N/A	N/A
NSB	3.43	3.44	N/A	N/A
SSA	3.89	4.22	N/A	N/A
SSB	4.21	3.97	4.22	N/A

Appendix E: Review of General Education Grade Distribution

A review of all general education courses was conducted to determine if there were particular courses that students struggled with, academically, more than others.

Methods

All courses were reviewed from the 2004/5-2007/8 school years. Courses were included in the chart if more than 10% of the student received a D, E or withdrew. If this occurred in more than one of the years reviewed, the course was not included in the analysis. In the case of multiple sections, at least one of the sections met the criteria if the course was included. Note that an “X” denotes that between 10-19% of the students fit the criteria and a “*” denotes 20% or more of the students fit the criteria. Because this analysis did not review course content, no explanations are being provided as to why students did not do well in the course, instead, the review solely examined the degree to which student either did poorly or withdrew from the course.

Observations

- Seventeen percent of the courses had between 10-19% of its students fit the criteria all four years while 20% fit the criteria 3 out of the 4 years.
- In at least one of the years 40% of the courses had 20% or more of the students fit the criteria; each of these courses met the lower threshold in at least one other year.
- The departments that were most likely to have students meet these criteria with at least four general education courses were Biology, History, Math and Music

	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08
ART 2422		X	X	
BIO 1100		*	*	
BIO 2101	X	X	X	
BIO 2129			X	X
BIO 2700	X	X	X	
CHM 1100	X		X	X
CHM 1110	X	X	X	X
CHM 1211			X	X
CLA 3170		*	X	
CLA 3780	*	*		X
EUR 1110		X		X
HIS 3170		X		X
HIS 3670		*		X
HIS 3765	X	*	X	X
HIS 3785			X	X
LAT 4920		X		X
MAT 1221	X			*
MAT 1225	*	X	*	*
MAT 1360	X	X	X	*
MAT 1521		X	X	
MAT 2700	*	*		
MUS 1251	X	X	*	X
MUS 1260	X			X
MUS 1270		X	X	X
MUS 2340		*	X	
MUS 4312	X	X	X	
MUS 4340		X	X	X
PHI 1001	X			X
PHY 1121		*	X	
POL 1120	X	X	X	

x = 10-19% of grades were D, E, or W

* = 20 +% of grades were D, E, or W

Appendix F: Report on Capstone Students Survey

During Fall Quarter, 2008, UPEC administered a survey to all SPU students then enrolled in a capstone course in their major. The survey had been developed by a special task force of UPEC meeting over the previous summer to determine the impact and value of SPU's general-education program. UPEC intended to gather qualitative data with this survey, in the form of written responses from capstone students.

In meetings early in Winter Quarter, 2009, UPEC analyzed the student responses to the survey, which were received at a near-100% rate. Each UPEC member was responsible for an initial reading and reporting to the committee of his/her survey-response's contents. Overall, this analysis yielded the following conclusions, divided, for simplicity's sake, into the categories of "positives" and "negatives" and provided below.

Summary

A review of the senior capstone papers revealed students desire a general education program that is academically rigorous as well rich in the integration of faith and learning. They want a program that is both relevant and coherent. They also desire a program that works well with their chosen major and helps them think about their future. UPEC discussed briefly what the data below might mean for re-thinking the gen-ed program. All assented that, because the data do not trend strongly either positive or negative, any changes to the program may not need to be radical.

Positives. The general-education program:

- teaches about hard work
- proves invaluable to interdisciplinary conversations,
- broadens foundations of how to integrate faith and culture,
- offers valuable career advice,
- makes students more well-rounded,
- helps in basic knowledge,
- aids in the selection of a major;
- complements the rest of the undergraduate program,
- teaches students to think more than offering specific content,
- provides a good experience via the U Scholars program to those who select this option.

Negatives. The general-education program:

- offers classes that were not engaging,
- requires work that is less challenging than many high school classes,
- proves unhelpful if one has grown up in Christian home (knew most of the content already),
- seems too irrelevant to genuine interests,

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- fails to meet students where they are at (assumes students are “Christian Neanderthals”),
 - requires useless and inadequate proficiencies (math, foreign language, and W program),
 - blocks the path to students’ majors.

Appendix G: General Education Competencies

Foreign Language Proficiency

Report submitted by the Department of Foreign Languages and Literature

Rationale: In this increasingly globalized world, those who know only one language are at both an experiential and competitive disadvantage; many important conversations, both past and present, are not conducted in English. We believe that the Foreign Language Requirement should be extended to all undergraduate students, and we applaud the recent initiative by Electrical Engineering to begin requiring it of their students. While we would prefer that the requirement be more than three quarters, we recognize that one academic year of language study is the “industry standard” for four-year institutions in Washington State.

Description: Rather than reinvent the wheel, we looked at the descriptions of progress in language proficiency devised by the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, based on decades of research. In describing where students should be at the end of the third quarter of the first year (2106 for Russian, 1103 for other languages), we found useful language for speaking, writing, and cultural knowledge.

In speaking (source of quoted material: ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines-Speaking).

- emerging ability to “create with the language”
- vocabulary beginning to broaden
- “participate in simple, direct conversations on predictable topics”
- “obtain information by asking and answering questions” with a sympathetic interlocutor
- “satisfy simple personal needs and social demands”

In writing (source: Preliminary Proficiency Guidelines –Writing)

- “meeting practical writing needs”
- “communicating simple ideas and facts in loosely connected sentences,”
- “comprehensible to those accustomed to the writing of non-natives”

In culture (source: ACTFL Standard 2.1)

“Students demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.”

Further Reading:

ACTFL (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages). *Standards for Foreign Language Learning, Executive Summary*.

http://www.actfl.org/files/public/StandardsforFLLEXecsumm_rev.pdf.

ACTFL. *ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines - Speaking*. Revised 1999.

<http://www.actfl.org/files/public/writingguidelines.pdf>.

Breiner-Sanders, K.E., Swender, E. & Terry, R.M. *Preliminary Proficiency Guidelines - Writing*. Revised 2001. ACTFL. <http://www.actfl.org/files/public/writingguidelines.pdf>.

Hadley, Alice Omaggio. *Teaching Language in Context*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1993.

Writing Proficiency

Report submitted by the Department of English

In response to UPEC's request for our assessment of SPU's General Education Writing Skills Requirement, the Department of English has been doing significant work in evaluating how college-level writing competency is articulated and measured on our campus. From those discussions we have developed three specific recommendations that, we believe, address both the current difficulties in assessing incoming student **preparation** for college-level learning as well as the much more important need for a university writing program designed to create real and high-level writing **proficiency** upon graduation. Yet despite the current instructional challenges, the English Department strongly affirms that writing competency should remain one of SPU's General Education cornerstones since it so demonstrably correlates with excellence in critical thinking as well as mastery of discipline-specific content.

RECOMMENDATION #1: To better assess incoming students' preparation for college-level study, we propose immediately replacing the English Placement Test with the SAT Essay for 2009-2010 as a tool for placing incoming students in SPU writing classes.

Currently, the English Placement Test is given at the end of a student's freshman USEM term and is used mainly in "triage" fashion to identify those students most in need of our very limited writing resources, either in remedial courses or in a basic, entry-level writing class. There are several advantages to reading SAT essays over the summer instead of EPTs in December for this project. First, this change will create two additional quarters available for students to enroll in that basic college writing course, English 2201. Secondly, the English Department will have the much more manageable and less heinous burden of reading and assessing over 700 freshman essays in more than one single December day. In addition, the EPT was originally designed in-house as a writing preparation assessment tool because the SAT essays weren't available to institutions for their own uses. They are now. Finally, students may arguably be performing at their best on an SAT essay when some don't take the EPT as seriously as they might. This change will require some funding to pay for English faculty members' time reading and grading essays over the summer.

RECOMMENDATION #2: We propose the following curricular change: that only those incoming students who receive a writing placement score of "2" or "3" be mandated into taking remedial writing courses. Those students receiving a score of "4" or above will be given recommendations for directed self-placement.

Because of the very limited writing resources currently available at SPU, we believe that first priority must go to only those students most in need of immediate remedial help in the "triage" model mentioned above. This situation is far from ideal but should be seen as a stop-gap measure in the absence of a comprehensive university writing program (see Recommendation #3). In addition, we believe that self-directed placement into writing courses for the other incoming students will lead to greater pedagogical success in those particular classes.

RECOMMENDATION #3: We propose that SPU implement a new, university-wide writing program that creates real writing proficiency – and even excellence – upon graduation.

We believe that SPU's writing program, as it is currently constituted, does not accomplish what we understand to be its institutional mission as part of the General Education program and that is real writing **proficiency** – and even excellence -- upon graduation. Instead, the current system of writing assessment and instruction is designed only to assess an incoming student's high school **preparation** for college-level study and to offer only short-term help for the neediest cases. Instead, we believe that all SPU graduates should have as part of their university education the kind of in-depth writing instruction that all premiere universities require of their students. Only in this way do we see our graduates as becoming truly **proficient** in writing – as a real “exit” competency and not an “entrance-level” skill. We stand ready to provide detailed proposals of how such writing programs are incorporated at many universities, both locally and across the nation, and pledge to provide our disciplinary expertise, if asked, toward helping implement such a program at SPU.

Mathematics Proficiency

Report submitted by the Department of Mathematics

Over the last two years, we have conducted a review of our pre-college level mathematics program. As a result of this review, we are developing a proposal to completely revamp how we handle remedial mathematics instruction.

Some Background and Results of Our Review

The mathematics proficiency requirement. Generally speaking, the mathematics proficiency requirement involves two items: (1) a proficiency exam which is required for all entering students who do not meet certain exemptions (such as an SAT math score of 580 or higher), and (2) required remedial course work in Arithmetic Review for students who do not pass the proficiency exam. Students who do not pass the proficiency exam may be required to take anywhere from 1 to 5 credits of coursework in Arithmetic Review, which can be completed either as self-study courses through the Math Lab or as direct instruction courses (MAT 0131 and 0132). The material covered on the proficiency exam and in the arithmetic review classes is at approximately the level of 7th to 8th grade standards in the State of Washington.

The changing nature of SPU's student body. The mathematics proficiency requirement was established in the 1970's, and has changed very little since then. The Math Lab and the proficiency requirement have served us and our students well in many ways for more than three decades. However, during that time, the nature of our student body has changed substantially. As the selectivity of SPU has slowly increased, the number of students needing remedial work in Arithmetic Review has slowly declined from approximately half of incoming students in the 1970's to about one-fourth today. Perhaps even more importantly, the percentage needing the full 5 credits of Arithmetic Review has dropped even more dramatically to approximately 4% of incoming students today (we don't have good historical data on this, but we believe that this exceeded 25% at one time). We expect this trend to continue and to be helped along by changes currently occurring in high school graduation requirements in the state of Washington. As a result, the original target audience for Arithmetic Review is disappearing.

The gap between Arithmetic Review and our Exploratory Curriculum classes. Courses such as MAT 1521, MAT 1360, and MAT/BUS 2700 which count toward the Exploratory Curriculum have proficiency at the level of Intermediate Algebra listed as a prerequisite for the class, and the classes do require some algebraic thinking and manipulation. But students who enter SPU with weak mathematical backgrounds generally take Arithmetic Review and then jump directly to these other courses with no preparation in the necessary algebraic skills, potentially leaving them unprepared for success in those courses. We are currently doing little or nothing to bridge this gap.

The uniqueness of our requirement. It is now very difficult to find any comparable institutions with

(i) a test that is similar to ours, or (ii) a comparable proficiency requirement at the arithmetic review level, or (iii) a similar self-study mode of offering remedial courses.

Some common complaints about the current proficiency requirement. (NOTE: We do not necessarily agree that all of these complaints represent legitimate problems, but we acknowledge that such complaints are commonly heard.)

- Math-phobic students naturally have extreme difficulty trying to learn math by independent study. Lots of E/N/W grades. Inadequate motivation to keep them on track. Inadequate support available.
- Students can only take the proficiency exam once. Some would likely pass if given a 2nd opportunity, eliminating their need for Arithmetic Review.
- The proficiency test (and arithmetic review) don't cover the "right" kinds of skills in a world where computers are everywhere and everyone has cell phones with calculators in their pocket. They also aren't the right skills to prepare them for success in Exploratory Curriculum courses.
- The "uniqueness" of our requirement makes it impossible to complete the requirement elsewhere and transfer it in.

Proposal for Change

Goals:

Our primary goal is to better align our entrance testing and our remedial pre-college level coursework with both (1) the level of our current entering students and (2) the level of mathematics actually needed for success in subsequent exploratory curriculum courses.

We also hope to increase student success and learning of mathematics, both in pre-college level math courses and in Exploratory Curriculum courses. Along the way, we would like to appropriately address as many of the complaints listed above as possible.

The Core of the Proposal:

- Eliminate the math proficiency requirement, proficiency test, and arithmetic review classes.
- Eliminate the math lab as it currently exists (and along with it several existing courses).
- Institute a new program of placement testing which will be required for entrance into mathematics exploratory curriculum courses. There will be some exemptions to this requirement based on SAT scores, transferring in with the math exploratory curriculum requirement complete, etc.
- Create two new pre-college level math courses for students who do not pass the placement test and need remediation before entering our exploratory curriculum courses. These will be classroom based courses rather than self-study like the current math lab courses.

Currently there are two separate mathematics requirements at SPU – the proficiency requirement and the exploratory curriculum requirement. We propose to reduce this to a single requirement, shifting our emphasis in both entrance testing and pre-college/remedial coursework away from a common proficiency requirement that all students must satisfy and toward a developmental approach designed to help students to succeed in subsequent math and science courses required for the exploratory curriculum (or for their major).

Placement Testing: The goal of our entrance testing will shift from determining basic math proficiency to determining students' readiness to take college level math courses. Students who do not need to take any math courses, such as transfer students who have completed the exploratory curriculum math requirement, will not need to take the placement test.

- We will use an externally developed placement test rather than an in-house test.
- Our current plan is to use the College Readiness Math Test (CRMT), which will soon be used (by law) for math placement at all public universities and community colleges in Washington.
- In-state students will likely soon be taking the CRMT while in high school, so they will come to us with CRMT scores in hand.
- We can offer it on-site several times a year (for a fee) for out-of-state students or others who need it.
- CRMT is offered daily at a UW testing center.
- We will allow an exemption for high SAT-math scores. (But SAT-math alone has been shown to be a poor placement tool, which is why we're choosing to use the CRMT rather than SAT-math scores alone.)
- Students can take CRMT multiple times if desired.
- We will use two separate cutoff scores on the CRMT (cutoff A and cutoff B) for entrance to different mathematics courses. We are still working on determining the cutoffs, which will be based on data, including results from other institutions and some pilot data that we have from administering the CRMT with some classes on campus here at SPU this year.

New Courses: Two new pre-college level mathematics courses will be created for students whose scores on the CRMT indicate lack of readiness for college level mathematics. We are tentatively calling these MAT 0144 and MAT 0145, College Readiness Mathematics I & II. Each will be a 3-credit, classroom based course. The prerequisite for MAT 0145 will be completion of MAT 0144 **or** a score above cutoff A on the CRMT. The full details and catalog descriptions for these courses will be provided to UPEC in the autumn. These courses will focus on key concepts and skills needed for success in college level math courses, particularly our exploratory curriculum courses. They will be less focused on arithmetic and hand computation than our current remedial courses, with more emphasis on algebraic skills and on conceptual understanding.

Prerequisites for introductory college level math courses: Our introductory college level math courses will be divided into two groups. Tier B courses require more algebra and a higher level of mathematical sophistication than Tier A courses.

Tier A: MAT 1521 Contemporary Mathematics

MAT 1560 Numerical Reasoning (*content course for elementary teachers*)

Tier B: MAT 1110 Precalculus

MAT 1360 Introduction to Statistics

MAT 2700 Statistics for Business & Economics

The prerequisite for Tier A courses will be a CRMT score above cutoff A **or** completion of MAT 0144. The prerequisite for Tier B courses will be CRMT score above cutoff B **or** completion of MAT 0145. Note that a student planning to take a Tier B course who scores below cutoff A on the CRMT must take **both** MAT 0144 and 0145.

There will probably also be other exemptions – for example, a high SAT-math score will be allowed to substitute for the CRMT. If a student takes an intermediate algebra course at another college or university and transfers the credit to SPU, we will allow that course to substitute for MAT 0144 and/or 0145, so such a course will satisfy the prerequisite for both Tier A and Tier B courses.

This all gets a bit complicated, so it will be very important for us to make all of this very clear in the end for both students and advisors. Perhaps we'll try to get something set up something up in Banner that checks all of these different conditions and then reports a single math prereq code (like 0, A, or B) to students and advisors which means:

0: must take MAT 0144 before taking any college level math course

A: eligible to take any Tier A course or MAT 0145

B: eligible to take any Tier A or Tier B course

Courses to be discontinued: The following courses are currently offered only as self-study courses through the math lab, and would be discontinued under this proposal:

- MAT 0121, 0122, 0123, 0124, 0125, 0126 Arithmetic Review
- MAT 0140 Introductory Algebra
- MAT 0152 Intermediate Algebra I
- MAT 0153 Intermediate Algebra II
- MAT 1112 College Algebra
- MAT 1114 Trigonometry

In addition, MAT 0131/0132, the classroom version of Arithmetic Review, would be discontinued.

Timeline: We expect the new requirements to go into effect with the 2010-2011 catalog.

Currently we plan to shut down the math lab, all arithmetic review classes, and the classes listed above at the end of the spring quarter in 2010. We will begin offering the new courses and the CRMT in autumn 2010.

Transition Plan: Students entering SPU through the 2009-2010 academic year will still be required to complete the math proficiency requirement, so a careful transition plan is needed (1) to help facilitate their timely completion of the proficiency requirement and (2) to deal with students who do not complete the requirement before the end of the 2009-2010 academic year when the math lab closes.

We break the students into three categories:

1. **Continuing students who entered SPU in 2008-2009 or earlier:** These students must complete all required credits of arithmetic review for the math proficiency before the end of the 2009-2010 academic year. Students who fail to complete the required credits by spring 2010 will be required to substitute MAT 0144 and/or 0145 to complete the proficiency requirement.
Those still needing 1-3 credits of arithmetic review will be required to take MAT 0144 (3 cr.). Those still needing 4-5 credits of arithmetic review will be required to take both MAT 0144 and MAT 0145 (6 cr. total).
2. **New students entering SPU in autumn 2009:** The same requirements as above will apply to these students. However, we will make two small changes to our policies to help reduce the number of students needing to complete the proficiency requirement:

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- Students who fail the proficiency exam on their first try will be allowed to take it a second time (perhaps for a fee?) to test out of the arithmetic review classes.
 - The proficiency requirement will be waived for any transfer student who enters SPU having already completed a course equivalent to one of our math exploratory curriculum courses.
3. **New students entering SPU in winter or spring 2010:** The math proficiency requirement will be waived. Many of these students are transfers who would be exempt anyway, so this will probably affect only a very small number of students. Ideally we'll try to work these students into the new program with the CRMT if they do need to take a math exploratory curriculum course.

Appendix H: Student Academic Services Review

At the request of UPEC, in February 2009 the undergraduate academic counselors discussed SPU's competency requirements, Common Curriculum and Exploratory Curriculum in light of issues frequently raised by students and/or requirements that students frequently misunderstand. A summary is listed below.

- **English Proficiency:** Students who receive credit for English composition courses or AP exams completed while in high school cannot understand why the credit they receive does not meet SPU's English proficiency requirement. Also, it would be helpful if students whose scores on the English Placement Test require them to take ENG 2201 would be allowed to fulfill the requirement by completing a community college course since SPU does not offer sufficient ENG 2201 courses to meet demand.
- **Math Proficiency:** The department is in the processes of changing from proficiency to a placement model.
- **Foreign Language Proficiency:** Students do not understand why SPU requires a C or better in the third quarter of a foreign language when all other general requirements may be fulfilled by minimum grade of D.
- **“W” requirement:** It would be extremely helpful if each major offered at least 8 credits of “W” in courses required for the major (not just electives).
- **USEM:** Inconsistencies in the rigor of these classes is a frequent complaint of students. Some complain that their roommates have it easy; others complain that their own class did not prepare them for the rigors of “real” college courses.
- **UCOR in General:** Students don't understand how the three courses are connected.
- **UCOR 1000:** As with USEMs course load varies widely by instructor, and most of these classes appear to be taught as an “Intro to” the discipline of the instructor.
- **UCOR 2000:** Few complaints about the course, other than it is just a standard history course, and students don't understand why this course is part of the university core.
- **UCOR 3000:** Many students really enjoy this class.
- **UFDN 1000:** Some students claim the class is taught with the assumption that all students have a background in Christian faith.
- **UFDN 2000/3001:** Course content seems to vary quite a bit.
- **UFDN 3100:** Students tend to enjoy this course, perhaps responding to the emphasis on student discussion and thought formation as opposed to memorization.
- **Exploratory Requirements in General**
 - Limiting courses from the GE list should not be the way to control enrollment
 - Each category needs clear criteria for inclusion or exclusion in GE
- **Arts & Humanities:** Students find the 3 credits in each category confusing. It would be easier if the formula was 5 credits in A, 5 credits in B, with 15 total credits (the last five credits can be in a subject they have already completed)—similar to Natural Sciences. This is the single most confusing part of our curriculum and the source of delayed graduation for many students.
- **Social Sciences A:** More sections of ANT 2250 would be helpful
- **Social Sciences B:** There appears to be no logical standard for determining which classes may count for SSB and which may not, particularly in the History area.

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- **Natural Sciences:** UAC appreciates the new additions from CSC. .
 - **Math:** No comments on exploratory math—except that many students dislike math.

Appendix I: UPEC's Goals for the Exploratory Curriculum

In early 2006, the General Education sub-committee of UPEC identified a need to have goals for courses that were to be included in the general education/exploratory curriculum. This need, in many respects, began the current assessment endeavors. After a year of discussion the following goals were approved, and then reaffirmed by UPEC in May, 2009. UPEC is including these goals in the current report as a place for the forthcoming Taskforce to begin their discussion.

Approved, December 2006
Reaffirmed, May, 2009

Introduction

The general education program is foundational to a liberal arts education. In practice, it is a kind of scaffolding that provides the backbone on which all other knowledge and skills can be constructed. This is accomplished with a curriculum providing engagement with a breadth of subjects necessary for a liberal arts education. These subjects include the arts and humanities, the social sciences, the physical and biological sciences and mathematics. A strong general education should also provide students the opportunity to develop skills essential for success in life. Finally, infused throughout the curriculum is attention to the development of character and ethical decision making. It is our belief that character development occurs not only in teaching and co-curricular activities but also in the practical moments of daily life.

Liberal Arts

- Students will be able to understand the importance of a liberal arts education.
- Student will be able to place the course in a liberal arts context.

Methodologies

- Students will be able to articulate and use multiple ways of knowing as appropriate to the discipline of study.
- Students will recognize ways of knowing across disciplines.

Global Citizen

- Students will be able to place course knowledge in a local and global context.
- Students will develop an awareness of personal and cultural biases.

Intellectual Skills

- Students will develop foundational skills of academic life and cultural literacy:
 - Written communication
 - Critical thinking,
 - Information literacy
 - Quantitative reasoning
 - Visual literacy
 - Reading Comprehension

Habits of Learning

- Students will exhibit academic integrity.
- Students will exhibit positive habits of learning.
- Students will behave in a manner conducive to a positive learning environment.