General Education Assessment Report

2012-2013

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Introduction

Resolution of Commitment to Institutional Effectiveness

We, the faculty, administration, and staff of Lindenwood University, as an institution of higher education, have a continuing commitment to excellence in our educational programs and environment. Therefore, we are committed to a comprehensive and ongoing strategy of assessing and improving the effectiveness of the institution in meeting its mission and purposes.

Lindenwood University's mission statement expresses its "commitment to values-centered programs leading to the development of the whole person—an educated, responsible citizen of a global community." The University's general education (GE) program is designed to promote this mission and provide students with a foundation of knowledge, experiences, and skills that should be common to all college-educated individuals. The GE program consists of a platform of courses that introduces students to a variety of perspectives on the world. These courses undergird LU students' academic journey and impart knowledge and skills that are intended to serve students not only throughout their formal education, but also throughout their lives.

In the 2011-2012 academic year, the University embarked on the development of a new system for assessing its general education program, spearheaded by the University General Education Committee.[1] The most significant change to assessment practices was a departure from the assessment of multiple discrete courses toward the assessment of the overarching outcomes these courses are collectively designed to achieve. This report provides an overview of the general education curriculum, describes the new assessment plan, discusses steps taken towards implementation of that plan thus far, and presents findings from the first academic year in which the new method of assessment was implemented.

General Education Curriculum

The University's GE program requires students to take between 49 and 50 credit hours of classes across nine core areas. The difference in the number of credit hours is due to differences between the required number of credit hours necessary to earn a Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BA). For a BA, students must fulfill a cross-cultural requirement (6 credit hours). For a BS, students are not required to complete the cross-cultural requirement but are required to complete an additional science course (3-4 credit hours) and an additional math course (3 credit hours).

The GE program requirements are as follows[2]:

1. English composition (6 credit hours)
2. Communications (3 credit hours)
3. Humanities (6 credit hours of literature; 3 credit hours of philosophy or religion)
4. Fine arts (3 credit hours)
5. American government or American history (3 credit hours)

[1] See Appendix A for a complete description of this committee's duties and structure.
[2] A comprehensive listing of the courses within these areas that may be taken to fulfill these requirements may be found in the University Undergraduate Catalog.

6. Culture and civilization (3 credit hours of world history (BS); 9 credit hours (BA), must include 3 credit hours of world history and 6 credit hours of cross-cultural or foreign language coursework)
7. Social sciences (6 credit hours)
8. Mathematics (3 credit hours (BS); 6 credit hours (BA)
9. Natural sciences (10-11 credit hours (BS); 7 credit hours (BA), must include a lab for both BS and BA)

General Education Assessment Process

Lindenwood University has engaged in assessment of its GE program for several years. However, assessment has recently undergone a significant transition, and the new system of assessment includes some re-defining of student learning outcomes as well as significant revision to how assessment is conducted. The objectives of this transition were as follows:

1. To ensure that GE student learning outcomes link to the LU mission.
2. To ensure that student learning outcomes are consistent with program curricula.
3. To engage all faculty more directly in the assessment process.
4. To promote best practices in assessment.
5. To create forums and mechanisms to ensure that assessment findings are routinely reviewed and meaningfully connected to program enhancement and student learning.

Prior to an institutional shift in assessment practices in the fall of 2011, the University had identified a set of GE program goals and objectives. Faculty had participated in the development of these goals and objectives, with which all GE course-specific objectives were expected to be aligned. This resulted in GE course-specific objectives that often included the same language as (or language very similar to) the GE program objectives (though the course objectives were more specific to the content of a particular course). Additionally, the foundational GE program objectives were not always *explicitly* stated in the GE course-specific syllabi. Finally, before 2011, GE assessment focused on the assessment of *individual course objectives* rather than the broader program outcomes of the GE foundation in its entirety. While the findings resulting from such assessment practices were informative in regard to how well students acquired information and skills particular to each course, they were, not surprisingly, less useful in determining how effectively students had acquired the competencies expected from the GE program, overall. Moreover, no steps were taken to systematically measure the extent to which graduating seniors achieved these objectives.

In 2011-2012, the General Education Committee led the reorganization and development of the new GE assessment practices and the revision of the previous objectives—now termed "student learning outcomes." This new system of assessment shifted the focus to how the GE learning outcomes are integrated into the whole of a student's education at LU and how these outcomes are manifested in work completed in the student's major field of study. The development of the new GE assessment process ran parallel to a major initiative to revamp the assessment of all degree programs. As was the case with the GE program, degree program assessment had previously been heavily course-based. The emphasis for both GE and degree program

assessment has now shifted to end-of-program outcomes that reflect the collective contribution of all courses within a given program.

This shift resulted in the recognition that many of the then-existing student learning outcomes needed to be reconsidered. Three problems were noted with the original set of GE objectives and goals. First, the distinction between what constituted a "goal" and what constituted an "objective" was not always clear. A second problem was that some goals and objectives were overly broad and could not be readily operationalized into measureable units. Finally, some goals or objectives included multiple competencies/types of knowledge embedded within a single goal or objective. Thus, the first step the committee took was to revise these objectives and transform them into the more discretely measurable "student learning outcomes" (thereby adopting the language consistent with that most frequently referenced in current assessment publications produced or endorsed by the Higher Learning Commission with respect to assessing student learning).

Committee members met over a period of several months to produce the new SLO's. Despite major revisions to how the outcomes are described, the basic aims of general education remained the same and also remain in alignment with the LU mission. Neither the GE foundation (required courses) nor the overarching objectives of GE courses were altered. The revisions to outcomes were primarily semantic or involved, for example, simplifying the old outcomes by distilling multiple ideas originally embedded within one outcome into separate outcomes. Finally, the new SLO's are broken into components that comprise the discrete skills that will be measured. The committee strived to ensure that the new SLO's reflect the following understandings:

Core competencies: These competencies refer to skills and abilities that students will need in order to succeed in their future careers and in order to become contributing members of a global, multi-cultural society. When creating SLO's, it is understood that the emphasis should be placed on the acquisition of such competencies/skills rather than simply on the acquisition of fact-based knowledge.

Academic performance at its highest level: It is understood that SLO's represent each program's expectations of what all students graduating from LU should be able to do; these abilities should reflect high academic standards while being reasonably attainable.

Faculty expectations: Consensus among all faculty members regarding the outcomes should exist, along with a sense of how these competencies will be taught or how the skills and knowledge will otherwise be imparted as students progress towards their degrees.

Core GE curriculum: Regardless of the different degrees that students earn, GE SLO's should reflect what faculty members expect of *all* graduates. SLO's should prompt the faculty to consider where in the GE curriculum students acquire particular competencies, how these competencies will be reinforced, and what opportunities might be created for students to display and practice these competencies in the both GE classes and the major programs.

The result of several months of meetings dedicated to revision and planning was a set of well-defined, measurable SLO's that are more closely linked to the LU mission than were the previous objectives. These new SLO's, listed below, were introduced at an all-faculty meeting in August 2012:

1. Students will be aware of global history and diversity.
2. Students will develop a sense of responsible citizenship.
3. Students will communicate effectively.
4. Students should be able to draw from a variety of disciplines to arrive at coherent and educated opinions.
5. Students will think critically and analytically.
6. Students will effectively engage in creative thinking.

As of the 2012-2013 academic year, all faculty members teaching GE courses were required to include on their syllabi the SLO(s) that each course is intended to help achieve. Faculty teaching different courses that satisfy the same GE requirement conferred and reached consensus as to the appropriate SLO(s) to include on syllabi. Furthermore, the GE committee now requires that future proposals for new GE courses include the appropriate SLO's.

It is not expected that students completing a GE course will demonstrate full competency of the SLO(s) linked to that course. Rather, the outcome may be covered and augmented in multiple GE courses. The SLO's will also be both directly and indirectly reinforced in the courses required for the students' majors. Thus, faculty members teaching GE courses are no longer required to assess SLO's for students completing individual GE courses. Rather, assessment occurs as students are approaching graduation and assesses student mastery of GE program-wide SLO's.

The University's General Education Committee determined that it would be most efficacious to evalute and report on the SLO's in cycles. Thus, each year, efforts will be concentrated on two SLO's, which will be rotated until all six SLO's have been asssessed, at which point, the cycle will start anew. The committee voted to assess the following for the 2012-2013 academic year:

- SLO #3: Students will communicate effectively.
- SLO #5: Students will think critically and analytically.

The next tasks the committee faced included (1) identifying the types of data to collect that would best represent critical thinking and communication skills, (2) devising ways to measure these skills, and (3) determining an adequate sample size for the assessment of the SLO's. The committee preferred methods that would not impose significant additional demands on students' time, such as would be required if standardized exams were used or if the committee created its own assessment instrument. An additional concern with standardized tests or other measurement tools that are not required coursework was that if students' grades were unaffected by performance on these measures, there would not be not a strong incentive for students to produce their highest level of work when completing them, and, consequently, assessment results might appear artificially depressed. Therefore, the committee opted to identify and assess suitable "embedded" assignments—those that were already required for completion of a course and for which students received a grade. However, and importantly, because the grades earned on the assignments themselves would not necessarily reflect mastery

of competencies on the SLO's of interest, another method for evaluating the assignment was necessary. To meet this need, committee members developed a rubric for assessing critical thinking and two rubrics for assessing effective communication (See Appendices B - C). Although SLO #3 concerns "effective communication," of which both written and oral communication skills are important dimensions, it is not possible to find a single artifact that reflects students' performance on both written and oral communicaton skills. Therefore, the skills must be assessed independently, and hence, a rubric was created for each. These common rubrics reflect the components of the SLO's and are intended to increase inter-rater reliability. The rubrics are arranged on a 4-point scale, and rather than simply defining 1 as "poor" and 4 as "excellent," the rubrics provide a precise definition for what constitutes a given score on each component.

Four committee members were designated to serve on a sub-group called the Rating Team that would be responsible for conducting the assessment. Membership for this group was based on three criteria: (a) diverse representation of schools/departments, (b) representation from both the St. Charles and Belleville campuses, and (c) a connection between the SLO's being assessed and the schools/ departments with which members are affiliated. The third criterion was not particularly pertinent during this academic year, as, presumably, all faculty members are accustomed to evaluating critical thinking and written and oral communication skills. However, this criterion may take on greater relevance in future years when, for example, the SLO involving "creative thinking" is assessed, which may require faculty members with expertise in the creative disciplines. The team's duties include:

1. Reviewing descriptions of faculty-referred assignments to determine suitability for rating and making the final selections on which of these "artifacts" to rate.
2. Developing and pilot-testing rubrics based on a sample of work from the previous academic year.
3. Rating all artifacts using the common rubrics selected.
4. Consulting with faculty members who submitted assignments to seek clarity regarding the subject matter of the assignments if needed.
5. Submitting findings (ratings on each artifact) to the Dean of Institutional Research for analysis and inclusion in the General Education Assessment Report.
6. Offering recommendations for modifications to the GE assessment system for the subsequent assessment cycle.

In mid-2012, the Dean of Institutional Research (IR) began soliciting artifacts from faculty that would be useful for assessing SLO's # 3 and #5. Faculty members were asked to provide descriptions and samples of potential artifacts, such as research papers, written exams, projects, and oral presentations. They were encouraged to select from capstone, senior-seminar, or other upper-level major-based courses in which students are expected to display peak performance and show full synthesis of the range of SLO competencies. The Dean of IR also emphasized that an ideal assignment should reflect *both* critical thinking and communication skills (in the interest of efficiency).

The Dean of IR convened the first meeting of the Rating Team in October 2012. The team reviewed the sample artifacts that had been submitted in order to determine whether these assignments adequately reflected the SLO's of interest and to ensure the assignments were not mired in technical or course-specific content that would render the assessment of the SLO's too difficult. The team also required that at least one artifact be an oral presentation which, ideally,

would be rated by all team members. These presentation assignments would be chosen based on the ease with which faculty could observe the presentations. Thus, it was expected that some disciplines could be represented twice in the sample.

It is always desirable to collect data from as large a sample as is possible. However, faculty time to engage in assessment was a major constraint. Only four faculty member were designated as raters, and it was agreed that all four would read every paper. Because the intent was to assess major research papers that are completed as parts of senior capstone projects in senior seminars or in other 400-level courses, it was anticipated that papers would range from 10-20 pages in length. Moreover, most papers would be outside of the team members' discipline on topics on which they lacked expertise and about which team members were not accustomed to reading (though this would also serve as a benefit, as it would require students to more clearly and coherently demonstrate or communicate mastery of SLO competencies in order to achieve the highest ratings, as faculty raters would not be experts in the field but would, essentially, be lay readers). Therefore, it was important to keep the sample size manageable so that the assignments that were referred for assessment could be effectively rated by the team. There were 1,145 students slated to graduate in the 2012-2013 academic year. Using statistical power testing, it was determined that the team needed to collect, at minimum, artifacts from 36 students in order to ensure a representative sample of graduating seniors. The team had planned to select 10 different artifacts and rate four of each type of artifact (rounding the sample size up to 40). The intention was that a written sample would be selected from each of the University's nine schools expected to produce graduates in the 2012-2013 academic year.[3] It became apparent in the early stages of collecting sample artifacts that quite a small number of papers and oral presentation assignments were being referred to the Rating Team for consideration, for reasons that were not quite clear (though reasons are speculated upon later in this report).

The Rating Team made final selections on assessment artifacts in November 2012. An artifact was identified for every school except School of Education (SOE). While the intent was for all schools to be represented, the team received only one sample artifact from the SOE, from the department that offers a Bachelor of Science in Exercise Science. However, this assignment was a case study that represented the kind of report that a practitioner in the field of exercise science might prepare, structured in accordance with a field-specific format. Consequently, it was not seen as a good fit for assessing critical thinking skills and was thus not selected as an artifact for the assessment of GE SLO's. The team requested more samples from this school, but SOE faculty indicated they could not identify any senior assignments that would be suitable for this analysis. The primary reason given was that education students enter the field as student teachers during their senior year, and prior to that upper-level coursework is devoted to teaching them how to develop curricula and lesson plans. These assignments are clearly necessary to preparing students for their careers, but like the one received from the exercise science program, they are not likely to reflect critical thinking skills of the sort the team was seeking to assess.

The Dean of IR contacted the instructor of each course for which an artifact was chosen and requested the rosters for those courses for the fall and spring semesters (targeting seniors slated to graduate in December 2012 and May 2013). A random number generator was used to select

[3] The University now has ten schools, but the newly created School of Nursing and Allied Health Sciences did not begin offering courses until the fall of 2013.

four numbers corresponding to four students on each roster. The course instructor was asked to submit a copy of the assignments completed by those students to the Dean of IR. The students' names and grades were removed to reduce the possibility of rater bias. For oral presentations, the faculty members were provided the presentation time, date, and location so that they might observe four random presentations.[4]

The team reviewed artifacts from the following areas:

School/Division	*Course*
School of American Studies	AST4000 – Senior Seminar
School of Business and Entrepreneurship	MGMT 46082 – Management Policy
School of Communications	COM 46000 – Mass Communication Theory
School of Fine and Performing Arts	ART 4901 – Research Methods (artifacts included a research paper and an oral presentation assignment)
School of Humanities	HIS 40000 – Senior Seminar in History
Division of Social Sciences[5] (LU-Belleville)	CJ 4400 – Senior Seminar
School of Sciences	BIO 46500 – General Ecology
Lindenwood College of Individualized Education (LCIE)	IHM 48900 – Health Management Capstone (oral presentation)

All artifacts were collected by the Dean of IR by the end of the 2012-2013 academic year and sent to the team for review. The team made independent ratings of each artifact and submitted results to the IR dean. The results are summarized in the following section.

Results

The final number of assignments submitted for rating was 28, falling short of the goal of 36. One reason for the shortfall was that no assignments from SOE were included in the sample (as discussed earlier in this report). Second, the School of American Studies, the University's smallest school, had only one prospective graduate enrolled in the course from which the artifact was selected, resulting in just one paper to represent this school. The third reason concerned the logistical and timing difficulties related to observing the oral presentations. Due to inclement weather on the evening of one of the scheduled classes in which an oral presentation was to be rated (at a class held at a satellite campus), only two raters were able to attend. The second oral presentation fell during finals week, and due to scheduling conflicts, once again, only two raters were able to attend. As such, only three presentations, rather than the targeted four, were observed and assessed. A smaller sample size means the results are less generalizable than they would be if the minimum threshold had been achieved or surpassed. Nevertheless, the sample assessed represents students from eight of the University's nine graduate producing schools, and the range of scores on the assignments assessed suggests that the sample, despite its small size, was biased neither towards top-performing students nor towards those with the weakest competencies in the skill areas examined.

[4] Obviously, it was not possible to maintain anonymity for the oral presentations.

[5] This artifact came from the criminal justice program in the Division of Social Sciences at LU-Belleville. This program is housed in the School of Human Services at the St. Charles campus. Thus, both the School of Human Services and LU-Belleville are represented via this artifact.

The mean ratings of the communication skills components, and for the skill overall, are presented in Tables 1 and 2, below. As noted earlier, the SLO concerns both written and oral communication skills. As stated earlier, it was not possible to find a single artifact that reflected student performance on both skills, so the skills were assessed independently.

Table 1 (n=25)

Student Learning Outcome: Written Communication*	
Component	Mean score
Thesis/Focus	3.3
Organization	3.2
Language and Diction	3.0
Syntax and Mechanics	2.5
Content and Development	3.2
Overall Mean Score	3.0

* *Ratings scale: 1-4; see Appendix B for full explanation of components and scoring*

The overall mean rating for written communication skills on a 1-4 scale, on which 4 was the highest rating, was a 3. Neither the GE Assessment Committee nor the Rating Team set a benchmark or target score; rather, team members simply agreed that the desired goal was for students to score as high as possible, which would be a perfect score of 4. The mean score of 3 on a 4 point scale can be viewed as students averaging 75% of the perfect score. Students were strongest on the presentation of clear, identifiable theses and maintaining focus on the thesis throughout their papers, with a mean score of 3.3 on this component. They were weakest on syntax and mechanics (mean score of 2.5). This latter finding is somewhat surprising in light of the fact that all LU students must pass a Writing Proficiency Assessment (WPA) in order to graduate, which focuses heavily on the mechanics of writing. Considering students are strongly encouraged to take the WPA sometime prior to their last semester before graduation, it is reasonable to assume that many of the students whose work appeared in the sample had already completed (and passed) this test.

In addition to providing a numerical rating, the Rating Team members were encouraged to provide narrative comments that supported the ratings given or in response to observations about skills that were singularly strong or weak. Most comments were used to support or elaborate on weaknesses rather than strengths. The most frequent comments concerning writing skills pertained to the following weaknesses:

- Vague, overly broad theses
- Poor editing/minimal proofreading
- Grammar problems
- Little variation in sentence structure
- Weak sentence and paragraph transitions
- Disjointed arguments; poorly connected ideas

Table 2 (n=3)

Student Learning Outcome: Oral Communication*	
Component	Mean score
Organization	3.5
Eye contact	3.0
Delivery	3.2
Overall mean rating	3.2

* *Ratings scale: 1-4; see Appendix B for full explanation of components and scoring*

Because there were so few ratings for oral communication skills (two faculty members rating three speeches), there was no pattern among the comments showing common themes, and, in fact, reviewers made very few comments at all. Students were rated as more proficient in oral communication than they were in written communication, with an average rating of 3.2 on all components. Of course, it is very difficult to generalize from three students' presentations, and, therefore, it was decided that this score would be regarded not as a stand-alone finding but as another component of communication skills. As such, the scores were combined with the written communication ratings, resulting in a mean rating of 3.0 for communication skills overall.

Table 3 (n=28)

Combined results with oral and written communication skills	
Overall mean rating	3.0

Table 4 displays the mean ratings on critical thinking skills.

Table 4 (n=25)

Student Learning Outcome: Critical Thinking Communication*	
Component	Mean score
Sophistication	2.7
Logic	3.0
Evidence	2.9
Empathy	2.8
Self-Awareness	2.8
Overall mean rating	2.8

Ratings scale: 1-4, see Appendix C for full explanation of components and scoring

Students were less proficient on critical thinking skills than they were on communication skills. The mean rating for all components was 2.8 out of a possible 4.0. Students fared poorest in their demonstration of sophisticated and original thought and were strongest in use of logic in the arguments made. There was no benchmark or target score set. The results reveal that students scored, on the average, 70% of a perfect score, indicating that there is room for improvement.

Again, faculty included some narrative comments along with the ratings, and as was true with the communication skills, most remarks pertained to weaknesses. These were the most common problems noted:

- Student demonstrated simplistic presentation/perspective.
- Student was unaware of alternative viewpoints.
- Student's evidence did not sufficiently support arguments.
- Student did not push limits of knowledge.
- Student failed to cite all sources.

The final section of this report discusses study limitations, explains how the GE assessment results were communicated to faculty, and outlines actions planned in response to these findings.

Limitations of Study and Next Steps

This study reports on the first attempt to comprehensively assess how effectively students achieve GE outcomes. Previous GE assessment efforts were focused on individual courses and were either too narrowly concentrated on outcomes specific to the content of a particular course or assessed proficiency on GE objectives on a mixed sample of freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors. This study was unique to the University in that the outcomes of interest were the newly-defined GE student learning outcomes, and the sample of assessed assignments included the work of only seniors, most of whom were expected to graduate within the academic year. Thus, the artifacts could be reasonably expected to represent the culmination of the GE experience and mastery of the GE SLO's.

Certainly, the small sample size is a limitation of the study. The sample of 28 pieces of work reflecting communication skills and 25 pieces of work reflecting critical thinking skills fell short of the minimum required sample size of 36. Despite repeated requests for senior-level assessment artifacts, the Rating Team simply could not identify 36 different assignments that would permit for them to carry out a thorough assessment on all components of the two SLO's. The team was restricted by the number of prospective assignments received. The Rating Team would have preferred a larger sample for this study, and repeated requests for prospective artifacts were put out to faculty (by the team members themselves, the Dean of IR, Assessment Committee, and by other GE Committee members). The net yield was just twelve assignments (twelve separate course assignment, as opposed to pieces of student work). Of the twelve that were referred for consideration, nine were selected (seven written assignments and two oral presentations). Three assignments were rejected because they were not a good fit for the outcomes being assessed.

It is not clear why more prospective artifacts were not referred. It is reasonable to assume that many senior-level courses feature at least one assignment in which students are expected to display communication and critical thinking skills. Therefore, the lack of sufficient referrals is both puzzling and disappointing. It is likely that this problem may in part be attributed to the fact that LU has not yet achieved a strong "culture of assessment" campus-wide. This is true despite the institution having made tremendous strides in the last ten years with respect to how assessment is conducted; faculty may simply face many competing demands on their time, and assessment-related matters do not always rise to the top of school or department agendas, nor are assessment-related tasks necessarily a priority for individual faculty members. Assessment is still a rather "isolated" process, both in terms of time allocated to it and faculty members' expertise with assessment practices. Assessment tools are often administered at the end of the semester (appropriately, to capture data on graduating students), and data are analyzed and

reports compiled at the end of the academic year. Throughout the rest of the academic year, attention to assessment activities is uneven. It is suspected that many faculty members simply did not fully attend to the requests for artifacts, and/or did not understand what was being sought, and concluded they had nothing useful to offer. As we advance into the second year of GE assessment, it is imperative to find ways to more effectively engage faculty in this process and create incentives for participation.

The specific findings of the data analysis were presented to the Provost and the General Education Committee at the start of the 2013-2014 academic year. The Dean of IR invited all faculty to attend a workshop to debrief the study and discuss how to act on findings. Faculty members were also notified that the findings, along with this report, would be posted in a shared folder on the LU network. All faculty members were invited to review findings and submit recommendations to the GE Committee or Dean of IR regarding how to strengthen curricula and/instructional strategies in response to these findings.

The Dean of IR and a member of the Rating Team led the aforementioned workshop in August 2013. Though attendance at this workshop was optional, all but one school had at least one representative in attendance. Participants engaged in a discussion on the significance of findings and next steps that should be taken in order to address student weaknesses and to continue strengthening the GE foundation. Some useful ideas emerged from this workshop that could be consolidated into three strategies: (a) placing greater emphasis on the value of strong communication skills and critical thinking skills through requiring more assignments in which students must display these skills; (b) greater use of iterative-style assignments, in which students are given feedback on work submitted and are required to continually revise and resubmit until they generate high-quality work that demonstrates sufficient competency on core skills; and (c) ensuring that significant weight is given to communication and critical thinking skills in the assessment/grading of all written work and oral presentations (thereby providing an incentive for students to develop and display strong skills consistently regardless of course content). It was suggested that the latter strategy might include use of common rubrics in which the specific components of the GE outcomes are listed and rated. A major topic of discussion was how to best engage faculty in acting on these in a meaningful way. This is challenging, given the fact that it is not easy to determine how many faculty members will actually review the findings or to what extent they will find the results concerning. GE teaching responsibilities are spread across multiple faculty members (including adjunct instructors), and all faculty members are expected to play a role in ensuring students master GE learning outcomes, regardless of the course designation. Thus, the sheer number of faculty members involved in teaching and ensuring a strong, effective GE curriculum makes implementation of new teaching practices very difficult to achieve, unless all faculty members are required to review findings and the accompanying recommendations. A number of related, and arguably greater challenges, include persuading faculty to adopt different strategies for teaching, to require different types of assignments, and/or to introduce or adjust grading rubrics or other measurement tools. It is not easy to set mandatory expectations in this regard without treading on academic freedom—nor is there sufficient evidence to ensure that these strategies would produce the desired improvements in student competencies. Finally, it was seen as desirable to raise students' GE competencies in a way that is as non-bureaucratic as possible and does not significantly add to faculty workloads. Thus, the intent was to avoid forming another committee, sub-committee, or task-force. It was determined, therefore, based on input from attendees at this workshop and from the GE Committee, that the best avenue for pursuing these

proposed strategies or developing others would be through an existing structure: the Writing across Curriculum (WAC) initiative.

WAC is an initiative designed to help students strengthen their writing skills and to use writing more effectively as a general tool for learning. The initiative has created a pilot project in which all schools are encouraged to label a course "writing intensive" (WI) if it requires a considerable amount of writing. Faculty has also been asked to add more writing intensive courses in disciplines in which students generally do little writing (e.g. math, sciences). Faculty members teaching these courses are asked to offer enhanced support for the students by providing deeper feedback, drafting, and grammar instruction. WAC also provides writing specialists to support faculty teaching WI courses. The Dean of IR will meet with the faculty members leading this initiative in the fall of 2013 and review the data presented in this report and explore ways to pilot and monitor strategies that target specific components of writing and critical thinking skills in which students' scores were weaker.

The GE Committee and Rating Team have identified the two SLO's that will be assessed in the 2013-2014 cycle:

- SLO # 1 - Students will be aware of global history and diversity
- SLO # 2 - Students will develop a sense of responsible citizenship.

The team has made some tentative decisions as to the methods for assessing these outcomes and will reach a firm decision and begin implementing these methods in time to capture data on the December 2013 graduates and the May 2014 graduates.

The areas of emphasis for the 2013-2014 academic year remain the same as those noted in last year's General Education Assessment Report, as follows:

- Identification of areas in which students are less than proficient and examining ways to strengthen the GE curricula so as to achieve higher levels of proficiency.
- Refinement of the GE assessment methods and exploration of additional methods, including indirect methods, for assessing GE SLO's that yield the most meaningful results.
- Encouragement of faculty to use course-based assessment data more strategically, honing in on suspected weaknesses in the GE curriculum.
- Ensure that despite varied instructional methods, faculty members are teaching toward common objectives and that GE SLO's are reinforced throughout GE and degree program curricula.
- Promotion of student awareness of targeted outcomes so that students recognize the core competencies, skill sets, and body of knowledge they are expected to attain.

The University will continue to work to engage all faculty members and create a climate in which assessment is valued and woven into the institutional culture. Assessment data will continue to inform curricula decisions and ensure curricula reflect the LU mission.

Appendix A

General Education (GE) Committee

Description and Procedures

General Education Committee: Members serve two-year terms; there is one rep per school, except for the School of Humanities and School of Sciences, which each of which have two.

Governance Purpose and Function

The principal responsibility of the General Education Committee is to maintain consistency of course requirements that lead to a well-rounded liberal arts education. The members of the GE committee will monitor the implementation and integrity of the general education program across the academic schools on the heritage campus as well as on all extended campuses and for both the traditional program (meeting during the day) and the evening program.

Membership and Term of Service

One full-time faculty member is elected by the membership of each academic school to serve in staggered two-year terms. "Full-time faculty member" is defined as an employee with a regular faculty contract who teaches at least 18 hours per fiscal year or an employee who has a full-time contract to work in the doctoral program.

The VP-AA/PROVOSTAA, a representative for the Academic Services office, and the assessment officer also serve on the General Education committee without vote.

Officers

The membership of the GE committee elects the chairperson and vice-chairperson, with the latter leading the meetings when the chairperson cannot attend. The GE committee also appoints a reporter, who keeps the minutes of each meeting and forwards those minutes to all committee members for their review prior to the next scheduled meeting.

Frequency of Meetings

The GE committee holds regular meetings once per month during the academic year on the first Wednesday of each month. However, when the agenda is particularly busy, additional meetings may be called. The day of the month on which the meetings will be held may be changed based on the desire of the members. The chairperson of the GE committee sends reminders to members prior to each meeting along with an agenda for that meeting. Official business cannot be conducted unless there is a quorum of more than 50% of the voting membership. All business is conducted in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order.

Agenda-Item Categories

1. Annual review of the general education program on the heritage campus as well as on all extension campuses and for the traditional day program as well as for the adult education program.
2. Annual review of general education syllabi to ensure that all general education classes are in line with the GE philosophy and objectives.
3. Formulation of recommendations for consideration by the Faculty Council and Deans' Council.
4. Consideration of proposals submitted by any faculty or staff member that relates to the general education program of the University.
5. Consideration of proposals submitted by any faculty or staff members that relates to the cross-cultural program of the University.
6. Balance concerns of a traditional liberal arts education with changing needs of the students/society.
7. Development of consistent reporting mechanisms between the integrated database (CAMS) and the academic schools.

Processes

Issues, questions, proposals, and tasks may be conveyed to the GE committee by the faculty as a whole, a department, a school, the Deans' Council, the VP-AA/PROVOSTAA, the President, or another committee or task force. The GE committee may also originate its own tasks and initiatives in the course of setting its agenda and considering requests from other sources. When issues are submitted to the GE committee, those items are added to the agenda. At a subsequent GE meeting, the issue is addressed by the membership and one of four options will be taken:

1. Discuss the issue and vote.
2. Discuss the issue and assign members to do background research and report back at the next meeting.
3. Discuss the issue and invite the sponsor of the proposal to further explain the proposal at the next meeting.
4. Discuss the issue and assign members with speak to their academic schools.

Submission of Committee's Report/Recommendation

1. After a proposal has been approved by the GE committee, that proposal is taken to the Faculty Council by the VPAA/Provost. The Faculty Council may vote in favor of the proposal.
2. The proposal is presented to the faculty as a whole for review and vote at the next regularly scheduled faculty meeting (if the proposal would make fundamental changes in the University's educational policies).
3. The proposal is then sent back to the EPC for revision.
4. A proposal may be rejected.
5. The general faculty must have a quorum of more than 50% of full-time faculty members in order to conduct an official vote on a matter of educational policy.
6. The GE Committee may request a joint meeting with the Faculty Council to seek consensus on a rejected proposal.

Approval/Revision Process

If the proposal is approved by the Faculty Council or the faculty, the VPAA/Provost will present the proposal to the Deans' Council for final review. If the proposal is approved by the Deans' Council, the VP-AA/Provost will take the proposal to the President for approval. At any time, a task force of GE members may be appointed to do further research into the issue**.**

Appendix B

Communication Skills

General Education Program SLO Assessment Rubric for *Communicates Effectively (Written Communication)*

Component	4	3	2	1
Thesis/focus	Clearly defined, identifiable thesis; All ideas point directly to or contribute to supporting the thesis—the information or content is relevant to the thesis.	Thesis is clear and identifiable but needs to be narrowed. Some tangential information.	Thesis is too broad, simplistic, or vague. Paper often loses focus.	No focus or thesis; much irrelevant material.
Organization	Argument is easy to follow. Ideas presented in logical orderly fashion; Transitions—ideas flow smoothly one to another. Paragraphs are unified and coherent.	Organization is basically sound, but sequence of ideas occasionally questionable. Some weak or missing transitions. Sequence of sentences within paragraphs basically clear.	Weak or disjointed organization. Paragraphs often contain multiple ideas. Abrupt movement between ideas. Sentence sequence often confused.	Ideas seemingly placed randomly—jumps around without reason; Argument difficult or impossible to follow
Language and Diction	Language and tone appropriate to subject and audience. Voice is energizing, passionate, and enthusiastic. Active and varied sentence structure and precise word choice.	Needs more variety in sentence beginnings and structure. Some question as to appropriateness of language to intended audience or subject.	Limited sentence variety. Intended audience is unclear or inconsistently addressed.	Tone seems bored and listless. Prose is dull and uninteresting. Author has lost sight of the reader. Language and tone almost completely neglects intended audience.
Syntax and mechanics	Precise language concisely written—little or no "clutter" or unnecessary verbiage. Cleanly edited and free from grammar/mechanical errors. Sentences clear and easy to understand.	Few mechanical errors but some editing needed; wordy in places; word choice sometimes questionable or meaning fuzzy.	Needs a lot of editing. Grammar, syntax, and vocabulary errors inhibit clear reading and understanding of content. Excess verbiage detracts from quality.	Poorly edited and proofread; much extraneous verbiage; mechanical errors are extremely distracting and make the reading difficult or impossible to follow. Little or no apparent editing. First draft quality.

Content and development	Content is strong, credible, and reliable, and presented in a manner that allows the reader to understand the argument and to see how the information relates to the claim.	Not quite enough appropriate information given to allow the reader to understand the argument and how the evidence supports the claims.	Information is limited and often irrelevant to the topic or unclear as to how it connects to the thesis.	Lack of appropriate information or failure to establish relevance of the evidence makes it difficult to understand the content or follow the argument.

General Education Program SLO Assessment Rubric for *Communicates Effectively (Oral Communication)*

Component	4	3	2	1
Organization	Presenter follows logical sequence and provides explanations/ elaboration.	Presenter follows logical sequence, but fails to elaborate.	Presenter does not follow logical sequence (jumps around in presentation).	There is no logical sequence of information.
Eye Contact	Presenter seldom returns to notes, maintaining eye contact with audience throughout the presentation.	Presenter maintains eye contact with audience most of the time, but occasionally returns to notes.	Presenter reads most of report, but occasionally makes eye contact with audience.	Presenter reads entire report, making no eye contact with audience.
Delivery	Presenter speaks clearly and loud enough for all in audience to hear, makes no grammatical errors, and pronounces all terms correctly and precisely.	Presenter speaks clearly and loud enough to be heard by most in audience, makes relatively few grammatical errors, and pronounces most terms correctly.	Presenter's voice is relatively clear, but too low to be heard by those in the back of the room. Presenter makes several major grammatical errors, and mispronounces some terms.	Presenter mumbles, mispronounces terms, and makes serious and persistent grammatical errors throughout presentation. Presenter speaks too quietly to be heard by many in audience.

Appendix C

Critical Thinking

General Education Program SLO Assessment Rubric for *Critical and Analytical Thinking Skill*

Component	4	3	2	1
Sophistication	Shows a high level of sophisticated thinking, original thought. Takes risks. Innovative interpretation of the evidence provides insights beyond the ordinary. The analysis possesses some meaning and significance.	Basically a sound argument with adequate support, but the reasoning tends toward the ordinary. Lacks strong originality and flair.	Limited to literal or naïve thought and analysis. Simple restatement of basic ideas and generalizations.	Cliché thinking. Superficial and fragmentary analysis. Lacks any theory or originality and doesn't reach a basic understanding of the material.
Logic	Logic clear and decisive—induction uses enough valid and reliable information to support the claim; deduction makes valid premises and structure of the argument is sound; analogies are relevant and consistent. No fallacies or false logic.	Basically good evidence but could use more or stronger examples; tending toward some oversimplification or generalizations. Some premises a little dubious or inadequately proven.	False reasoning or logical fallacies evident. Accepting of some false premises and makes some illogical connections or invalid syllogisms. Incomplete or fragmented logic.	No logical argument to speak of. Mostly a rant of personal bias that disregards proven evidence or theory. Filled with fallacies and misstatements.
Evidence	Wide breadth of support drawn from a variety of sources and disciplines or shows an extraordinary depth of material. Evidence clear, valid, and up to date. No false or misleading statements.	Evidence is solid, reliable, and plentiful, but too narrow and/or superfluous; needs more varied or developed sources.	Evidence is weak and sometimes irrelevant. Personal bias and values are inappropriately invading the argument.	Very little evidence, numerous factual errors, and little evidence that actually connects to or supports the major claims.

Empathy	Shows an understanding and awareness of others and a respect of valid disagreement. Able to respect the feelings of others without sacrificing intellectual integrity. Shows high level of maturity. Unusually open to exposure to different and unfamiliar ideas and values.	Still open to different and unusual ideas and values but sometimes uneasy or has difficulty in understanding or making sense of views and paradigms other than own. Tends toward conventional.	Somewhat able to understand values of others but mostly limited to own ideas and feelings. Uncomfortable with different or unfamiliar ideas. Staid and conventional.	Egocentric intellectual awareness. Ignores or is threatened by unfamiliar or unconventional values and ideas. Dogmatic and confrontational.
Self-awareness	Knows limits of personal knowledge and/or expertise of the subject. Pushes the limits of self-knowledge for both author and reader. Causes the reader to look at and reexamine values and mores. Recognizes personal biases and prejudice and deals with them in an intellectually rigorous manner.	Aware of personal limits but doesn't push understanding beyond current understanding. Does not jar the reader or force the reader to question values or ideas.	Unaware of personal limits of knowledge and expertise. Injects projection and prejudice in opinions and attempts to understand or explain the subject.	Believes to possess knowledge of a subject that is beyond his understanding. Unable to see the limits of his ignorance and projects that ignorance into argument as fact.

Assessment Report: Instructional Units (Lindenwood University)

Program: General Education		Academic Year:2012-13	Submitted By:	
Expanded Statement of Institutional Purpose	**Program Intended Educational Outcomes:**	**Means of Program Assessment and Criteria for Success:**	**Summary of Data Collected:**	**Use of Results:**
Mission Statement: Lindenwood University offers values-centered programs leading to the development of the whole person - an educated, responsible citizen of a global community. **Intended Educational Outcomes:** Lindenwood students will be 4. Effective communicators in both written and spoken forms 8. Skilled in problem-solving and adaptive thinking	3. Students will communicate effectively. (4)	3. Graduating seniors on a research paper or oral presentation or other senior class assignment demonstrating communication skills, judged by a multidisciplinary team of faculty raters using a common rubric for written assignments involving five components (thesis/focus, organization, language and diction, syntax and mechanics, and content and development), and using a common rubric for oral presentations involving three components (organization, eye contact, and delivery), 75% of the seniors will receive an average rating across components of at least 3.2 on a 4.0 scale. On no individual component will there be an average rating of less than 2.8 (4-pt. scale).	3. 44% of the seniors received an average rating of 3.2 or higher when the rubric scores for written assignments and oral presentations were combined. The average ratings for the five components on the rubric used for written assignments were 3.3 (thesis/focus), 3.2 (organization), 3.0 (language and diction), 2.5 (syntax and mechanics), and 3.2 (content and development). The overall mean across the five components on the rubric used for written assignments was 3.0. The average ratings for the three components on the rubric used for oral presentations were 3.5 (organization), 3.0 (eye contact), 3.2 (delivery). The overall mean across the three components on the rubric used for oral presentations was 3.2. When all of the scores for written assignments and	3. The School of Human Services (HS) provides opportunities in all classes for students to demonstrate effective communication skills, both oral and written, in progressively more difficult assignments in appropriate course levels: HS faculty will actively refer to the Writing Center and the library for research skill improvement; develop clear expectations for student presentations; model effective communication; teach the separation of opinion from sourced/referenced materials; emphasize mechanics and structure in grading. Applicable to all departments, the School of Fine and Performing Arts developed a standardized rubric for assessing writing assignments that includes syntax and mechanics

			oral presentations were combined, the overall mean was 3.0.	(spelling, punctuation, complete sentences, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, and capitalization). The School of Fine and Performing Arts added new writing requirements in conjunction with MUS 38900 Junior Recital and MUS 48900 Senior Recital.
	5. Students will think critically and analytically. (8)	5. Graduating seniors on a research paper or other written assignment reflecting critical thinking skills, judged by a multidisciplinary team of faculty raters using a common rubric involving five components (sophistication, logic, evidence, empathy, and self-awareness), 75% of the seniors will receive an average rating across the five components of at least 3.2 on a 4.0 scale. On no individual component will there be an average rating of less than 2.8 (4-pt. scale).	5. 32% of the seniors received an average rating of 3.2 or higher. The average ratings for the five components on the rubric used for written assignments were 2.7 (sophistication), 3.0 (logic) , 2.9 (evidence) 2.8 (empathy), and 2.8 (self-awareness). The overall mean across the five components on the rubric used for written assignments was 2.8.	5. The School of Fine and Performing Arts added critical analysis of form and content in all 20000- and 30000-level studio art classes (previously required only in 40000-level studio courses). Within the School of Sport, Recreation, and Exercise Sciences, the Exercise Science department created a new research course which addresses the critical and analytical concern. The course is a core course and will begin 2015-2016; all EXS majors will take the course in their junior/senior year. The Recreation Administration department re-focused its research course to address the critical and analytical

				concern. The Athletic Training Program on the Belleville campus offered a J-term class titled "Special Topics: Evidence-Based Medicine in Athletic Training." All of these research courses include analyzing multiple data sets and thinking critically on how to apply the outcomes based on various methodologies. The School of Human Services Students will be exposed to controversial issues and asked to challenge personal belief systems; students will be expected to analyze research and interpret findings in relationships to programs, issues, laws, etc. in a graded assignment; literature reviews will be used to provide alternative viewpoints; students will be expected to present an opposing perspective.