**Faculty Council – Student Learning and Assessment Committee**

**General Education Sub-Committee Report**

**Fall, 2013 - Spring, 2014**

***Committee Membership***

* The Committee Chair, elected by FC-SLA, Karen Rose
* The Assistant Provost for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, Brigitte Valesey
* School of Business Administration, Babatunde Odusami
* School of Engineering, John Davis
* School of Hospitality Management, Jeffrey Lolli
* School of Nursing, Sue Mills
* Center for Education, Innovation and Continuing Studies, Marcia Bolton
* Center for Education, Innovation and Continuing Studies, Kay Marie Platt
* Center for Social Work Education, Robin Goldberg-Glen
* College of Arts and Sciences, Humanities Division, Mara Parker
* College of Arts and Sciences, Science Division, Bruce Grant
* College of Arts and Sciences, Social Science Division, Karen Rose
* Student Services, Kandy Turner
* Library, Sam Stormont

***Committee Agenda***

The General Education Subcommittee (FC-SLA committee) met:

* September 26, 2013 – Reviewed organization and charge to committee, reviewed 2012-2013 work, developed a work plan for 2013-2014, and reviewed the work of the Diversity Task Force.
* October 31, 2013 – Discussed the findings of the Capstone report including its history, strengths and weaknesses, and began alignment work for the diversity objective.
* November 21, 2013 – Began compiling a list of classes that address the diversity objective and corresponding signature assignments, discussed NSSE 2012 report and suggested items that might be helpful in future assessment efforts, and began a discussion of the WE requirement.
* January 30, 2014 – Reviewed WE criteria across units and began discussion of revision based on common criteria.
* February 27, 2014 – Approved common criteria for a WE designation.
* March 27, 2014 – Reviewed and approved draft of WE revision proposal to be forwarded to the Student Learning and Assessment Committee for feedback.
* April 24, 2014 – Learned about Cultural Immersion projects that involve collaborations between Faculty and Student Services with a visit from Dean Gifford. Discussed future work for this committee.

***Introduction***

The Student Learning and Assessment Committee (SLA) and the General Education Subcommittee began their work during the 2013-2014 academic year. They were charged with the following:

(1) to gather information and review assessment reports relating to university-wide student learning goals and objectives. This charge includes reports from the Implementation Committee for Assessment of Student Learning (ICASL), the General Education Subcommittee, and other groups charged with assessment of student learning that transcend any individual school or college;

(2) to make recommendations on university policies, academic requirements, and assessment processes to improve achievement of university-wide student learning outcomes;

(3) to report to Executive Committee and Council on assessment of university-wide student learning goals and objectives, and on recommendations to improve student learning;

(4) to collaborate with the Provost on the implementation of recommendations regarding learning goals and objectives that are endorsed by Faculty Council.

Student Learning Assessment Committee has as a standing subcommittee

the General Education Subcommittee, which is charged

(a) to serve as an academic forum for general education discussion across the university;

(b) to co-ordinate the university-wide general education assessment activities (curricular and co-curricular);

(c ) to evaluate periodically the extent to which general education at Widener contributes to the achievement of the General Education Learning Goals and proposes changes to improve student learning;

(d) to summarize general education assessment activities and student outcomes, and make recommendations based upon assessment results in an annual report to the Student Learning Assessment Committee.

**General Education Subcommittee Work (2013 – 2014)**

**Focus.** Unlike the SLA committee, the General Education Subcommittee focuses solely on General Education Goals (GEGOs) which are as follows:

1. A liberally educated graduate communicates effectively.

a. Gives clear presentations before a group.

b. Writes papers that require locating, analyzing, and formally referencing information sources to support conclusions.

2. A liberally educated graduate thinks critically.

a. Makes claims and draws conclusions that require the analysis and evaluation of evidence.

b. Synthesizes divergent content, methodologies, and models.

c. Makes and assesses ethical judgments.

d. Demonstrates an awareness of different points of view and analyzes how these are informed by factors that may include culture, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, age, disabilities, language, religion, sexual orientation, or geographical area, among others.

3. A liberally educated graduate uses quantitative methods effectively.

a. Solves problems using mathematical methods.

b. Interprets, makes inferences, and draws conclusions from data.

c. Determines whether numerical results are reasonable.

4. A liberally educated graduate has developed a wide range of intellectual perspectives and methodologies.

a. Evaluates the workings of the natural and physical world using theories and models that can be tested by experiments and observations.

b. Evaluates social science theories and research methods related to questions of human behavior, mental processes, communication, social and cultural structures, and institutions.

c. Evaluates philosophical, historical, and aesthetic arguments, evidence, and artifacts.

**Subcommittee Charge for 2013-2014***.* In the Fall of 2013, the Gen Ed subcommittee was charged by the SLA: 1) to review alignment maps for the Diversity General Education Objective (Goal 2: Objective d) and to make recommendations regarding future assessment, 2) to review current criteria for the Writing Enriched (WE) designation across the University and to make recommendations regarding the standardization of this designation and 3) to review NSSE findings and recommend particular items that may be useful in future assessment efforts.

1) Diversity Objective (GEGO 2: Objective d)

Through the work of the Diversity Task Force chaired by Professor Stephanie Schechner, committee members learned about a University-wide developed measure (see Appendix) that was used in pilot work across the University. With Professor Schechner, we discussed possible ways to move forward on the assessment of this objective. To that end, each representative went back to respective units to find out where the diversity objective was aligned in their curriculum. The findings were summarized and are included in the Appendix. As can readily be seen, this objective is most consistently addressed in the Humanities and Social Science units in the College of Arts and Sciences. As the College of Arts and Sciences has adopted a diversity objective as part of their own goals (Goal 2: Objective e), University assessment of this objective will now become more systematic. We recommend the use of the diversity rubric as a measure to assess this goal as it reflects input from units across the University.

2) Review of WE Designation

At the request of the University Academic Affairs and Student Learning and Assessment Committees, members of the University General Education Subcommittee (GES) discussed the Writing Enriched designation (WE) over the course of several meetings. In those meetings, we considered: 1) current WE criteria as listed in the most current catalog, 2) criteria used across units for the WE designation, and 3) potential revisions of current criteria.

The proposal that was drafted and is included in the Appendix of this report, reflects the process recommended by the Faculty Council Academic Affairs Committee regarding the establishment of transcript designations: clear, objective criteria for awarding the transcript designation, a clear process for the approval of individual courses, and a clear process for periodic review of the courses awarded the designation. The resulting proposal was approved by the General Education Subcommittee and forwarded to the Student Learning and Assessment Committee. In April, the Student Learning and Assessment Committee approved it in its current form.

3) Review of NSSE Findings

Over the course of several meetings, the Gen Ed committee considered the findings in the NSSE 2012 report provided by Steven Thorpe. We discussed areas of strength and weakness (see Appendix). We also identified items that could be useful in future assessment efforts and suggested questions that could be added about a) high impact teaching practices, b) services available to encourage success on campus (e.g., writing skills) and c) perceptions of debt burden.

The committee also noted weaknesses in the NSSE methodology including a decreasing response rate (in comparison to 2006), confusing wording on some of the questions, and whether first semester freshman are familiar enough with the campus to answer questions confidently. Despite these concerns, the Committee agreed that the NSSE serves a useful purpose as an indirect measure of assessment that can be used to supplement direct measures.

4) GEGO 4 (Intellectual Perspectives).

Last year, we noted that there has been little work done with respect to Goal 4. Since most units expect that this goal is largely met through distribution requirements, we asked the SLA committee on behalf of the General Education subcommittee, to request from Arts and Sciences the results of their work on the assessment of this goal. Humanities, Social Science and Science units worked on this request during the 2013-2014 academic year. The results of the first wave of data collection for this goal is are expected in Fall, 2014.

**Subcommittee Future Work.** 1)It will be important that the University General Education and Assessment Committee be aware of ongoing assessment efforts across the Widener campus. At this time, A&S is engaged in collecting information about General Education Goals 1-4, but it is equally important to know what other units are doing with respect to these goals. Of particular importance will be in knowing how assessment data are being used to inform changes in the curriculum. 2) The Diversity Objective (GEGO 2: Objective d) will need to be examined in the coming year, as less is known about how we are doing with respect to this objective than other GEGO 2 objectives. 3) There is concern about how University ILOs and GEGOs will support the Strategic Plan. It is our hope that significant weight is assigned to academic goals in the current strategic plan.

Appendix

Diversity Alignment

University General Education Committee

October, 2013

A liberally educated graduate thinks critically.

* 1. Makes claims and draws conclusions that require the analysis and evaluation of evidence.
  2. Synthesizes divergent content, methodologies, and models.
  3. Makes and assesses ethical judgments.
  4. Demonstrates an awareness of different points of view and analyzes how these are informed by factors that may include culture, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender identity, age, disabilities, language, religion, sexual orientation, or geographical area, among others.

Humanities Division

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Courses** | **Artifacts** | |
| ***Fine Arts*** | | |
| AH classes: all incorporate some elements of diversity—students explore “otherness”, examine cultural exploitation, religious conflicts. In the more modern periods (Baroque and forward), the classes examine issues of class, ethnicity, race and gender.  Specific classes which especially feature issues of diversity:  AH 310: Impressionism (focus on gender, dominant culture vs outsiders).  AH 312: 19th-Century European Painting (focus on gender, dominant culture vs outsiders).  AH 314: 20th-Century Art (focus on gender, political systems, dominant culture vs outsiders)  AH 350: Women and Art (focus on gender)  AH 360: African Art (focus on race/ethnicity)  MUS: all courses incorporate some elements of diversity—students explore “otherness”, examine national and cultural attitudes  Specific classes which especially feature issues of diversity:  MUS 109 America’s Music: explores issues of race, ethnicity, subcultures, popular and folk musics  MUS 307 Romantic Music: explores nationalism  MUS 308 Music of the 20th Century: explores issues of ethnicity, nationalism, otherness, popular vs “classical” music  MUS 309 American Music: 1890-1980s: explores issues of race, gender, otherness, popular vs “classical” music  MUS 391 The 20th-Century American Musical: explores issues of race, ethnicity, gender, social and cultural issues | | Class discussions, writing assignments, museum assignments  Class discussions, writing assignments, concert reviews  Students participating in performance classes (music, dance) learn first hand-hand how to work and communicate with students of varying races/ethnicities. |
| **English** | | |
| ENGL 145 World Literature: examines literary traditions from non-Western world  ENGL 146 Women Writers: 1800 to Present: examines issues of gender  ENGL 147 Literature of the American Minority Experience :examines issues of race and ethnicity  ENGL 188 (Literature of the Gay and Lesbian Experience: uses readings, class discussions, and paper topics as the means by which students explore issues of sexuality.  ENGL 324: Issues in Bilingualism: examines social and political issues  ENGL 326: deals with non-Western languages and how they reflect cultures  ENGL 369 African American Literature: examines issue of ethnicity and race | | Class discussions, written assignments |
| **History** | | |
| HIST 104 Women in the Western Tradition: deals with gender issues  HIST 105 Wives, Witches, and Warriors: deals with issues of gender  HIST 111/112 World Civilization to 1500/Since 1500: helps students develop a global perspective by viewing non-Western cultures and histories  HIST 321 Women in the World Wars: deals with issues of gender  HIST 335 Russia in the 20th Century: emphasizes multinational character of Russia  HIST 337 Russia Since Communism : deals with such issues as gay rights in post-Soviet Russia  HIST 351 History of Women in America to 1870: gender issues  HIST 352 History of Women In American Since 1870: gender issues  HIST 364 Race, Violence, and Memory: racial and ethnic issues  HIST 371 Women and Work in the 20th Century: gender issues  HIST 376 Slavery and Abolition: racial and ethnic issues  HIST 378 The Segregated South: racial and ethnic issues  HIST 383 The Civil Rights Movement deals with issues race and ethnicity  HIST 392 China in the Modern World: explores Chinese culture, history, politics, and issues of identity  HIST 395 Chinese Private Lives: explores Chinese culture, ideals, identities and political regimes  HIST 396 Human Rights in China: explores Chinese culture | | Class discussions, written assignments |
| **Modern Languages** | | |
| Modern Languages: French, Italian, Spanish all use readings, class discussions, exercises to introduce diversity. Diversity is incorporated at all levels and in all classes by the very nature of the subject matter. Lower-level courses (100 and 200) explore differences between country of language and US through vocabulary and literature. At the 300-level, students explore identity (race, class, sexuality, gender) through literature, film, and face-to-face meetings with immigrants. Out of class events include visits to cultural institutions, cultural practices (soccer games, food-based events, etc.), and encouragement to participate in study abroad. | | Outside film series, visits to cultural institutions, experiencing cultural practices; class discussion, written assignments |
| **Humanities** | |  |
| HUM 188: requires students to interact with international students and visitors (interviews, etc.)  HUM 360 Seeing Others, Seeing Ourselves: entire course is based on diversity through an interdisciplinary examination of cultural production. Whether encountering arts, music, or literature, students look at relations between diverse peoples and explore issues of selfhood. | | Inteviews  Class discussions, written assignments |

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Social Science Division

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| **Courses** | **Artifacts** | |
| ***Psychology*** | | |
| Psy 215 - Multicultural Psychology\*    Psy 202 - Educational PSY: Early Learners\*  Psy 394/395 Practica and Internships  \*Both courses were used in the development and pilot assessment of the diversity rubric. | | Multicultural Movie Review Paper/Cultural Competence Paper  Intercultural Interview Paper  Multicultural Observation   Structured Reflection Questions  Journals |
| **Anthropology** | | |
| ANTH 105.  This course at its core is a critical thinking course which  focuses on two anthropological techniques: ethnography and corporate  culture analysis.  The one is a distinctly anthropological method to learn how to understand the "other" in foreign cultures and in ethnic groups in America.  In all ANTH 105 courses, the student is taken through the technique step-by-step in class activities, lectures, papers and exercises, culminating in a "real world" experiential exercise of  doing an ethnography with a small group.  The course materials take the student through a series of areas in which cultural diversity are  apparent: cognition, symbolism, language, religion, social organization, politics, and economics.  Corporate cultural analysis takes a subset of the ethnographic to help students understand how to understand the cultural elements of businesses and enterprises that might help them navigate the work world.   ANTH 216 Archaeology.  The only real way to understand the present is to understand how the past, even the deep past, created the cultures of today.  Whereas ethnography focuses on today, only archaeology can really document the cultural evolution of cultures. At the same time,archaeology, because of its limited data, presents the student with a uniquely difficult critical thinking  challenge. The course takes  through the techniques archaeologists’ use, even with their limited data, to reconstruct the past and attempt to understand the reasons for  change.  These thought patterns of how to approach complex analytical problems with limited data apply to a number of other fields.  In the process, the course looks at a number of cultures foreign to most  Widener students, yet applicable to our own.   ANTH 243, 245, 246 Area courses on The Middle East, Native Americans, and The Caribbean.  These courses by exploring the history and culture  of these groups in an anthropological way present a fuller picture to students of areas of the world or cultures that are unfamiliar to them.   At the same time, in presenting the evolution of these culture areas, the course provides students a way to think about why cultures differ, how they differ, and how in comparison to our own, they clarify the nature of our culture.   ANTH 250 Symbolism, Cognition and Society helps the students make sense of the complex nature of symbols in culture.  The often unexplored , but essential role of symbols in religion, politics, business, interpersonal relationships, foreign relations require students critically to assess how each of these cultural systems operates in American and other cultures.   ANTH 251 Progress and Poverty explores issues of how culture and competition results in global differentials in wealth and power. This  course introduces students to the historical roots of the crisis of underdevelopment and looks critically at what development agencies are doing to solve it. Students examine the nature of world-wide economic systems at the root of these disparities and how these disparities have lead to broad trends of unemployment, poverty, disease, and political instability in the developing world and, increasingly, in the developed world as well.   ANTH 252 CULTURE, POWER, AND THE WORLD SYSTEM This course exposes students to the critical role of culture in the development of the  modern world system. By looking at the ways globalization impacts different cultures around the world, students learn that it has very  different meanings and consequences for people in different cultural settings. Topics include modern slavery, NGO-based social movements,  trade liberalization, and the U.S.-led War on Terror.   ANTH 255 Race and Racism  explores the concept of race and its implications for personal and group interaction.  This course challenges  students first to assess the biological evidence for the existence of races, and then through historical and cultural analysis asks them to figure out why certain characteristics associated with race has come to  define treatment of different ethnic groups in America and abroad.   Examples emphasize African Americas and the Chinese. | | Ethnography |
| **Criminal Justice** | | |
| CJ 325: Gender, race, class and crime (Just submitted article for publication using framework awareness knowledge skills)  CJ 315 Juvenile Justice  CJ 210: Criminal Courts | | CJ 325:  take home reflection/essay exam, free writes in class  CJ 315: journal and take home reflection/essay exam  CJ 210: Free write ups in class, case studies (e.g. OJ criminal and civil cases, Rodney King) followed by small group assignments and large group discussion. There is no signature assignment for this class - I integrate diversity throughout the semester |
| **Sociology** | | |
| Sociology 215: Family – In this course, students investigate the major sources and outcomes of diversity and change in family formations and roles in the United States, particularly throughout the last century. A major goal of this course is to challenge students to think critically and assess how age, race, class, gender, and sexuality intersect to shape, encourage and/or restrict our family prospects and choices. Further, they learn how and why family patterns and trends vary across diverse family forms and groups in our society. | | Exams and reading quizzes  In-class discussion and group work activities |
| Sociology 235: Minorities in American Society-  The course investigates the role of race, ethnicity, and gender as the foundation of group relations and minority status in American society. The socio-historical process of creating subordinate groups and  the nature of prejudice and discrimination are examined. The social, economic, and political consequences of the process for both minorities  and the majority population are explored and related to issues of current interest. | | Exams  In-class discussion and group work activities  Paper assignments |
| Sociology 257: Sex and Gender – In this course, students critically examine what it signifies to be categorized as “male” or “female,” and how these social categories shape our sense of self, affect our lives and reinforce what we come to know as “social reality.” Students begin by learning the major distinctions between biological “sex” and the social category of “gender.” Throughout the semester, they go on to investigate many facets of gender in society, critically assessing how gender operates in society “at large,” and in their own lives as well. A major course goal is to challenge students to think critically and assess how age, race, class, and sexuality intersect with gender in a number of major social institutions (the workplace, the family, the military, education, sport, religion, etc). They also learn about diversity in biological sex, gender identity, and gender roles in U.S. society as well as abroad. | | Exams and reading quizzes  In-class discussion and group work activities  Paper assignments |
| Sociology 266: Class Society- This course traces the sociological and historical process of class formation in American society. Emphasis is on the styles of life characteristic of each class, on relationships among the classes, and on the consequences of inequality relative to the economic, political, and social opportunities available to individuals and groups. | | Exams  In-class discussion  Written Review Questions  Reflection Assignments |
| Sociology 275: African and African American Women in Society(Same as GWS 275)  This course will explore some of the significant life experiences of women in sub-Saharan Africa (such as marriage, sex and sexuality, motherhood, being a wife, families, aging, widowhood, work, and  urban vs. rural life), how the same type of experiences are lived by African American women, and how an understanding of culture and social organization helps us understand why African and African American women sometimes experience these similarly and sometimes differently. | | Exams In-class discussion and group work activities  Paper assignments |
| Sociology 312: Sexualities (Same as GWS 312)  This course looks at sexuality in the broadest sense, which means diversity of sexual practices, behavior, orientation, identity, disease, violence, comparative studies, and research. In covering these topics, students look at sex-related controversies such as birth control, abortion, procreation, symbolic meaning and language usage, school education programs, social control, rape, traffic in women, sex tourism, and commercialization. Through the use of readings, films, and guest speakers, the class applies a historical, transnational, and sociological perspective on sexualities from the past and present, and critical thinking to differences among social groups. The impact of gender race, class, and ethnicity is integrated throughout the course. Student involvement through discussion, research, and presentations ensure an active and meaningful learning environment. | | Exams In-class discussion and group work activities  Paper assignments |
| Sociology 315: Poverty and Society  When compared to most other advanced industrial capitalist nations, poverty rates in the United States are high, particularly in many of the nation’s urban centers. This course examines the causes and consequences of poverty. It explores the ways that social scientists define and measure poverty, examines the characteristics of poor Americans today, and considers a broad range of issues relating to poverty such as education, family structure, culture, economic restructuring, segregation, social movements, and public policy. To facilitate better comprehension and understanding of course content,  there is a service learning component to the class that requires students to participate weekly in an organized activity with a community partner in Chester. | | Exams  In-class discussion  Written Review Questions  Reflection Assignments |

Diversity Alignment

University General Education Committee

October, 2013

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Nursing Division

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| **Courses** | **Artifacts** | |
| ***Nursing*** | | |
| Pharmacokinetics – Nurs 205/206 – Explores diversity through the concepts of pharmacology throughout the lifespan, ethnopharmacology and the impact of culture on pharmacokinetics and medication administration education  Gerontology - Nurses need to address the health care needs of a diverse population of older adults. This course focuses on the physical, psychological, social, economic and cultural forces which influence the health of this population.  Knowledge Synthesis 3 - Identify evidence based principles and concepts that support actions selected in response to patient problems. | | Specific quiz and exam questions on cultural competence and ethnopharmacology. Also a lab that explores medication administration and barriers for the older adult (students wear an elder suit)  Students critique their own personal beliefs about aging  Students were assigned an EBP article on vaccination beliefs in a rural African American population. The overall goal was that the students would think more globally about their patient’s cultural, religious, and socio-demographic perspectives. |

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria**  **Level** | **Novice** | **Competent** | **Exemplary** | **Not Applicable (N/A) or**  **Not Observed (N/O) (Please specify )** |
| ***Awareness:***  ***Conceptual understanding*** | Demonstrates awareness of diversity as differences between people. | Characterizes diversity as differences in cultural practices, attitudes, and beliefs. | Reflects critically on diversity as multidimensional and inclusive in nature. |  |
| ***Knowledge:***  ***Knowledge of context*** | Demonstrates minimal knowledge of historical and contemporary context of the interaction between majority and minority groups. | Demonstrates moderate knowledge of historical or contemporary context of the interaction between majority and minority groups. | Demonstrates substantial knowledge of historical and contemporary context of the interaction between majority and minority groups. |  |
| ***Skill:***  ***Analysis*** | Catalogs differences between groups. Draws basic comparisons using self as reference point or norm. | Draws comparisons using knowledge of diverse cultural practices, attitudes and beliefs. | Analyzes diversity both between and within groups to draw meaningful conclusions. |  |
| ***Skill:***  ***Practical Application*** | Demonstrates lack of awareness of multiple perspectives when navigating the academic, social, and/or professional environment. | Demonstrates minimal awareness of multiple perspectives when navigating the academic, social, and/or professional environment. | Articulates and integrates multiple perspectives when navigating the academic, social, and/or professional environment. Understands the consequences of ignoring multiple perspectives when navigating the academic, social, and/or professional environment. |  |
| ***Skill:***  ***Engagement*** | Operates exclusively within personal norms. Employs monocultural perspectives and contexts when making decisions. | Makes informed decisions and fair judgments, using multiple perspectives and contexts. | Engages in objective and subjective reframing of assumptions using multiple perspectives and contexts. Serves as a catalyst for engaging others as citizens and professionals. |  |



Recommendations for Writing Enriched (WE) Designation

Report Prepared by General Education Subcommittee of Student Learning and Assessment Committee

Members of the Committee: Marcia Bolton, John Davis, Robin Goldberg-Glen, Bruce Grant, Jeffrey Lolli, Susan Mills, Odusami Babatunde, Mara Parker, Kay Marie Platt, Karen Rose (Chair), Samuel Stormont, Kandy Turner, Brigitte Valesey

At the request of the University Academic Affairs and Student Learning and Assessment Committees, members of the University General Education Subcommittee (GES) met to discuss the Writing Enriched designation (WE) over the course of several meetings. In those meetings, we considered: 1) current WE criteria as listed in the most current catalog, 2) criteria used across units for the WE designation, and 3) potential revisions of current criteria.

The proposal described herein reflects the process recommended by the Faculty Council Academic Affairs Committee regarding the establishment of transcript designations: clear, objective criteria for awarding the transcript designation, a clear process for the approval of individual courses, and a clear process for periodic review of the courses awarded the designation.

*Current WE criteria*

According to the Widener University 2013-2014 Undergraduate Catalog,

“Writing enriched courses have three or more writing assignments that include student editing and revision so that students learn to correct their writing errors. The multiple writing assignments, including revisions, total at least 25 pages. An emphasis on “writing to learn” assignments can be found in many of these courses” (p. 19).

Thus, the current WE criteria include multiple assignments (explicitly requiring 3 or more), student revisions, and at least 25 pages of writing. An emphasis on “writing to learn” may also be included, but does not appear to be required.

*University-Wide Use of Criteria*

Across the University, most units report that courses designed WE adhere to criteria found in the undergraduate catalog; however, a number do not. One reason may be that adherence to guidelines has become relaxed overtime; however, there are other reasons that are tied to concerns about the current criteria. For example, there are objections to the 25- page criterion with several units arguing that writing 25 pages alone does not necessarily improve one’s ability to write. Similarly, other units argue that instructor feedback--in particular, actionable feedback is crucial; significant revisions should be part and parcel of a WE designated class.

*Potential Revisions to the Current Criteria*

Given inconsistencies in WE criteria across units, there were at least two possible directions the committee could go with respect to recommendations: 1) recommend that standards remain in place with greater oversight, or 2) recommend revisions to the criteria to which all units can adhere. We took the latter approach focusing on process rather than products (e.g., 25 pages), and focusing on those processes that all units considered essential in the development of writing skills.

Our list included multiple assignments over the course of a semester, instructor feedback, and incorporation of feedback on subsequent writing. We found that our list mirrored that proposed by A&S in their recent revision of WE criteria (April, 2013). We also discussed the ease with which advisors and students could identify writing enriched classes that could meet individual needs. Although some units provide ‘Advisor’s Alerts’ that list WE designated classes, other units do not. Further, although a class is identified as writing enriched with a ‘W’, you cannot easily search and list these courses as you might for an instructor or class level; currently, searching for a ‘W’ in the fall/spring schedule will bring up all classes that begin with the letter ‘W’.

*Proposed Revision of WE Description, Goals, Criteria and Process*

Responding to individual unit concerns and our own discussion of important components of a writing enriched class, we recommend revision of University-wide WE designation to include the following description, goals, criteria, and process:

* Description

In addition to ENGL 101 all undergraduate students must complete at least four courses (preferably one per year) that are designated as writing enriched. Writing enriched courses employ a “writing to learn” approach: students engage more deeply with course material through the writing process while also strengthening their writing skills. Therefore, students should choose courses intentionally in close and informed consultation with advisers in order to supplement and complement the major.

* Goals

1) To facilitate students’ ability to communicate effectively through writing.

2) To provide sustained focus on writing, via multiple drafts and assignments, as a way to develop writing and critical thinking skills that students can use throughout their career at Widener.

3) To facilitate the discovery of and the development of mastery in a discipline/field of study.

* WE Criteria

1) The course includes a sustained focus on writing as demonstrated throughout the syllabus, through multiple assignments and/or drafts.

2) Students receive actionable feedback on their writing from the course instructor.

3) Students substantially revise using feedback from the instructor to improve their writing.

4) Students incorporate the feedback from the course instructor in subsequent writing.

* Availability of WE designated criteria to faculty, administration, and classes

We recommend that the description, goals and criteria be included in the University Catalog and listed on the University Web site consistent with recommendations of the Faculty Affairs Academic Affairs committee. We also recommend working with the registrar and campus cruiser to provide a flag that will capture the ‘W’ attribute. This will make it easier for students and advisors to discuss WE options that will suit individual writing goals each semester.

*Initial Approval and Periodic Review*

The General Education Subcommittee recommends a mechanism for oversight to: 1) determine whether a class meets the criteria for a WE designation , 2) to ensure continued adherence to WE criteria, and 3) to communicate status changes (i.e., when a WE class will not be offered as a WE class) to stakeholders who rely on WE designated class(es) to fulfill requirements.

Further, we recommend that individual units that offer WE classes be responsible for developing a mechanism for oversight in those classes. The committee considered a University-wide model for oversight, but felt that the goals of a WE class, specifically Goal 3: to facilitate the discovery of and the development of mastery in a discipline/field of study, would best be met with discipline oversight.

*Advantages*

The common goals and criteria set forth in this report seek to clarify the definition of the WE designation. They are consistent with Faculty Council Academic Affairs recommendations and they reflect common ideas and values among members of two assessment committees at two levels of the University (A&S General Education and Assessment and University General Education Assessment committees) and the Faculty they are charged to represent.

In clarifying the goals and criteria for the WE designation, we have sought to develop criteria to which all units could comfortably adhere, thereby leading to greater consistency across units. Further, better articulated criteria will help to guide both the development of WE classes and the assessment of WE goals.

Review of NSSE 2012 Findings

In our discussions of the NSSE report, we found some areas of concern: relatively low community service (given our goal), low levels of reading and preparation for class, low levels in understanding diversity and voting. However, when compared to comparative samples (e..g, Mid East Private, Carnegie class, and NSSE 2012 total), we are comparable.

Strengths were also noted: a relatively high percentage of our students perceive that their coursework involves the critical thinking skills of analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application.

We believe that the following items might prove useful in future assessments:

* ‘critical thinking ‘ items 2a to 2e, and 11,
* ‘writing’ items 1c through 1f,
* ‘diversity’ items 63-6f, 7h, 7d and.
* ‘relationship’ items 8a, 8b, 1p, and 13.

Additional questions could be added about high impact teaching practices, services available to encourage success on campus (e.g., learning disabilities, writing skills) and perceptions of debt burden.