

University of Kentucky

Final Team Report

Background

In February of 2005 a faculty committee was charged by the Provost to generate a series of guidelines and ideas, in an abbreviated document, that would serve as an intellectual springboard for further discussion about reform and revitalization of our current general studies program. The report brought forth by that committee was publicly vetted in 15 faculty and constituency forums, revised and then submitted to the Provost and the Senate Council. It called for the establishment of a set of four *core curriculum objectives* – and a host of associated learning outcomes - which would allow for an articulation of the skills and knowledge desired for all graduates of the University of Kentucky, regardless of major. The essential message was that a coherent framework for describing these shared objectives and outcomes must be conceptualized *before* implementation issues can be sensibly debated. This conceptual framework has not been officially adopted by the University; that process is ahead of us. But we are proceeding on the assumption that this set of principles or one that is very similar in spirit and intent will be adopted.

Looking Ahead

The abovementioned report also listed a series of recommended next steps and a timetable for completion of various broad phases of our reform process. The specifics are still a little uncertain, since the plan and the timetable are undergoing constant revision as we better understand the process, and as we absorb more of what we have heard at the Institute. In broad terms, however, the plans for advancing our project once we return to campus are delineated below.

1. Summer Workshop – we have been working on this idea for several months and a lot of time has been devoted to identifying the key individuals on campus to invite. One of the primary purposes of the workshop is to communicate what we have learned at the Institute. But we also want to:
 - a. Conceptualize alternative curricular models and begin to debate their pros and cons.
 - b. Familiarize participants with different assessment strategies and begin to debate their strengths and weaknesses
 - c. Open up a discussion on which skills are truly essential skills for our undergraduates, and begin the process of convincing faculty that it is no longer rational to dichotomize intellectual and practical skills, which is something new that we picked up at the Institute.

We also feel that it is critical that we get vigorous and visible buy in from our new Provost. The success of much, if not all, of what happens next will depend on that.

2. Report to the Vice-President on Institutional Assessment – this entire process of reform has heretofore been facilitated by a general oversight and planning committee and that committee will facilitate the summer workshop. However, it is also the responsibility of this committee, overlapping largely with the Institute team, to be informed by the report mentioned at the start of this document, by the AACU Institute visit, and by the summer workshop and submit a formal report to the Vice-President.
3. Return to the faculty – this step is not yet clear. We have had a couple of alternatives that have been fairly detailed, but no consensus has been reached within our group on the best way to proceed. This will be determined as the summer unfolds. However, the general plan is to take the various curricular models that were brought to the summer workshop, along with the workshop discussions, to the larger faculty at the University, probably through the Colleges

and to the specific Departments. Subject to rules of engagement, Departments (perhaps assimilated at the College level) will be asked to react to the different models and if they prefer one over all the others, give some detailed feedback on how their program can contribute to a general education curriculum that follows such a model, as well as comment on the effect this would have on their major. One of the issues not yet resolved is what group or committee will be in charge of this process. Such things are important, obviously, and we are still debating the best way to proceed.

4. The Senate – the hope at this point is that a clear pattern of preference will emerge, that one type of model will be clearly preferred to all others. The appropriate committee (not yet determined, but likely a standing, university-level curriculum committee that reports to the Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education) will then polish a proposal to take to the floor of the Senate for debate and, with luck, adoption.