

ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES

2007 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education: Effective Program Processes

Award Information and Application

Increasingly in the minds of accreditors and faculty leaders, the idea of “quality” education is associated less with “inputs” and more with the student learning outcomes and the continuous quality improvement processes associated with these outcomes. Accrediting bodies are now encouraging institutions to develop the view that quality education is not a simple matter of a static body of knowledge that faculty pass on to students. Instead, quality education is viewed as commitment to the ongoing activities of making *institutional choices* about appropriate outcomes, developing a shared faculty commitment to *actions* deliberately designed for student achievement of the outcomes, making *judgments* about student success with the outcomes, and ensuring *improvements* to outcomes and their instruction. However, while academic accreditors and faculty leaders are making a commitment to student learning outcomes and assessment, limited effort has been made to apply these concepts to an essential component of a liberal education, the General Education program.

As an organization committed to quality General Education and a national leader in promoting the centrality of General Education in the liberal education of students, the Association for General and Liberal Studies invites individuals and institutions to apply for the 2007 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education: Effective Program Processes. The awards are intended to promote institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement processes, especially as they apply to General Education programs, to recognize faculty and institutions that have made the commitment to these quality behaviors, and to provide much needed examples of effective, innovative improvement processes. The 2007 Awards will recognize excellence in two crucial General Education program processes: the efforts made by an institution to effectively design and implement a new General Education program (C1), or the successful steps taken to make a current General Education program work more effectively (A1). Additional information about and explanation of these General Education program process can be found in the *AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review*. Information on how to obtain the publication can be found on the web at www.agls.org.

Up to six awards (three per category) will be made each year during the AGLS conference, held annually in October. Winners will be asked to present a discussion of their program processes in an identified special session and provide a poster presentation for display throughout the conference. Winners will receive the following: a plaque recognizing their efforts, listing in the AGLS Newsletter, recognition of the process on the AGLS website, and half-priced registration for the up-coming conference, including a year’s membership in AGLS.

Award Selection and Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by an Award Committee comprised of AGLS Executive Council members, members of accrediting associations, and recognized leaders in General Education. Award categories are based on the Systems Analysis Questions found in the *Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review*. Applications will be judged on the extent to which the institution’s program improvement efforts can serve as a practical model for other institutions. Judging will consider how innovatively and effectively an institution has addressed one of the following continuous quality improvement processes:

- C1: Commitment to Common Student Learning Objectives. Process used to design a new program, including steps taken to identify and gain institutional commitment to the General Education knowledge, values, and skills desired in your graduates.
- A1: Planning and Operational Processes for the General Education Curriculum: Process used to make a current program more effective; the actions taken to produce a curriculum that is more purposeful, coherent, engaging, rigorous, and/or cumulative over the 2 or 4 years of degree programs.

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Application Format

To be considered for the award, an applicant on behalf of an institution should complete:

- Section #1: Contact information for individual submitting the application
- Section #2: Institutional endorsement by either the chief executive or academic officer
- Section #3: Application summary (150 words or less)
- Section #4: Responses to four award criteria, limited to two pages per criterion

Examples of Evidence for Award Criteria

Evidence of merit requires answering the questions under each of the criterion listed in the application below. Evidence should focus on specific activities and processes that employ the continuous quality improvement principles discussed in the AGLS publication *Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review* and found in the supporting reference materials listed in the *Guide*. The application should clearly present the creative solutions and leadership methods used to address the issues, concerns, and goals relevant to C1 or A1. Supporting material can be summarized as part of the application and narrative.

Award Timeline

April—Application materials available on AGLS website
June 15th—Final deadline for receipt of award applications
June 20th—Materials distributed to review panel
August 1st—Winners notified
October—Winners' presentations and awards during AGLS Annual Conference

Suggested Reference Material

Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Learning can be found at: www.agls.org. Supporting literature (from regional and specialized accreditors and from AAC&U) is listed in the *Guide*.


Application Submission

Applications and supporting materials may be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat format, sent to Paul Ranieri at pranieri@bsu.edu. Applications and supporting materials can also be mailed to:

Paul Ranieri
Executive Director, AGLS
Department of English
Ball State University, RB 2109
Muncie, IN 47306


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Section #1: Contact Information of Person Submitting Application

Name	Chris Wood Foreman
Title	Director of General Education
Institution	Eastern Michigan University
Department/Program	General Education, Academic Affairs
Street Address	106 Welch
City, State, Zip	Ypsilanti, MI 48197
Phone	734-487-0439
Fax	734-487-4299
Email	cforeman@emich.edu
Signature	

Section #2: Institutional Endorsement

Chief Executive Officer or Chief Academic Officer

Name	Donald Loppnow
Title	Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs
Institution	Eastern Michigan University
Phone	734-487-3200
Fax	734-487-4299
Email	dloppnow@emich.edu
Signature	

Section #3: Application Summary

Include a summary of the award application, identifying the award category (C1 or A1). Please begin the narrative with a brief description of your institution and the time frame for the process. Briefly explain your process and why you think it equates with quality. The summary should not exceed 150 words. The text box may be increased in size as necessary.

<p>Award Category: C1 Eastern Michigan, a comprehensive university with 24,000 students, began planning "Education for Participation in the Global Community" in 2002; the program will launch Fall 2007. The process of developing the curriculum was faculty-led and guided by a concern with what students should know when they graduate. The previous program had no learning outcomes or coherence. The new program is outcomes-based and is consistent with our</p>

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institution's emphasis on continuous improvement. The curriculum emphasizes speaking, writing, and quantitative reasoning; it includes categories for knowledge of the disciplines, U.S. Diversity, and Global Awareness; and it has a unique co-curricular component, Learning Beyond the Classroom. The outcomes for the program reflect AACU's outcomes for General Education, published after we developed the curriculum. In implementation, we have emphasized making courses intentional; making Gen Ed a coherent "program," and connecting Gen Ed to majors. Plans are also underway for using eportfolios to assess the program.

Section #4: Award Criteria

Criterion 1: Identification of the Problem

Provide a description of how your institution identified its need to design a new General Education program and commit to common General Education outcomes (C1), or its need to make a current program more effective by ensuring a more purposeful, coherent, engaging, rigorous, and/or cumulative General Education curriculum (A1). Address the following issues:

- The need at your institution, including context for the issue at your institution
- The process used to identify the need, for instance, a review of assessment practices by a campus committee or a visit by an accrediting agency
- The process used to understand the need
- The process used to communicate the need and related issues to faculty and decision making bodies

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

In 1997-1998, a Basic Studies Task Force chaired by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences was charged with examining the existing General Education program (called the "Basic Studies" program) and making recommendations. This program was designed in the mid 1980s and implemented in 1989-90. This task force was convened to respond to concerns about ease of transfer and number of credit hours, among other factors. The Task Force recommended no change in the curriculum, but did recommend a number of changes in the way the program was presented and administered. For example, it was recommended that the ways of thinking and talking about General Education be changed so that its true value would become known to students, faculty and staff. In particular, a framework was recommended for understanding and communicating the substance and value of Basic Studies; however, no real, immediate action or follow-up resulted from the work of this Task Force.

In 2001, a new provost was hired at EMU. Since nothing had been done in response to the recommendations by the Basic Studies Task Force, and since there was an increasingly clear need for change, the Provost, in winter 2002, convened the General Education Reform Committee (GERC). Members of the reform committee included faculty from all five colleges in the university (appointed by Faculty Council), representatives from the administration, and representatives from the two other major divisions within the university—Student Affairs and Enrollment Management. The committee was charged with examining EMU's General Education program with regard to the content and coherence of the program, the flexibility of the program, credit hours, common experiences of students, ease of transfer, and opportunities for integrating academic programs with other dimensions of the student experience. Up to that time, there had been no real assessment of the existing Basic Studies program. Pressure for assessment was coming from outside agencies such as NCA, as well as from the administration.

The GERC was chaired by a senior faculty member from the Department of English Language and Literature. The committee was committed to creating a state-of-the art General Education program appropriate to the context of

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EMU, which is a comprehensive, regional state university with a diverse student population, a large number of commuter students, and a high number of transfer and non-traditional students. The committee was aware that in order for the new General Education curriculum to be perceived as legitimate, the process had to be transparent to all constituencies, and the faculty, in particular, had to be included at every stage.

The GERC began doing research on General Education and quickly saw that an outcomes-based program would provide a coherent explanatory structure for the General Education program, and would facilitate assessment. Some members of the GERC were from programs with accrediting bodies and were already familiar with outcomes-based curricula. They educated the rest of the committee. It became part of the implementation of the program to educate the rest of the faculty and staff about outcomes-based learning.

The GERC's research started in Fall 2002 with a SCOT (Strengths/Challenges/Opportunities/ Threats) analysis. Members of the committee met with every academic department on campus, as well as with Faculty Council, EMU AAUP, personnel from the Divisions of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, community college counselors, EMU students, and EMU alumni. The committee considered it essential to seek the input and perspectives of all of these various constituencies and it relied on this information throughout the reform process. The committee also read widely on issues concerning General Education reform, brought nationally recognized experts on General Education to campus, and studied the catalogs and websites of numerous colleges and universities—some identified as possessing exemplary programs in General Education, some recognized by the administration as peer institutions, some competitors for EMU students—to familiarize ourselves with contemporary approaches to General Education. Committee members also visited some of these universities, attended professional conferences on General Education, and heard testimony from campus programs and departments interested in General Education instruction. For the substance of the curriculum, they were guided, in particular, by Martha C. Nussbaum's *Cultivating Humanity*. This book has been used throughout the implementation process to help faculty and staff understand the value of General Education in a twenty-first century university education. Throughout its research and the reform process more generally, two concerns that always remained at the forefront included a concern with developing a program that would be appropriate for EMU's institutional context and a concern with what students should know and be able to do when they graduate.

Finally, the GERC relied on several strategies throughout its research and planning processes to communicate the need for reform, its ideas, and related issues to faculty, staff, alumni, students, and decision making bodies. For example, the results of the SCOT analysis were summarized and presented to the Faculty Council and to various administrative groups. Lively discussions about the findings and what might be done to respond to them took place at these meetings. During winter semester 2004, the General Education Reform Committee offered its proposal for the new curriculum to the university community for consideration and commentary. The committee again visited every academic department and met with Faculty Council, the Student Leader Group, and representatives from the Divisions of Enrollment Management and Student Affairs. The committee then held a series of meetings in spring of 2004 focused on refining outcomes and other aspects of the proposed program. During the summer and early fall of 2004, committee members revised the proposal in response to the input received from across the university community. A final version of the proposed curriculum was presented to the Faculty Council and university community in late fall 2004.

Award Criteria

Criterion 2: Identification of Goals and Procedure Used to Address Needs

Describe how your institution identified and approved the goals and procedure used to address the need identified in Criterion 1 above. Address the following issues:

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- The persons involved in the process of identifying the goals and procedure used to address the need identified in Criterion 1
- The research used to identify the desired goals and procedure that would most effectively address the need identified in Criterion 1
- The process used to select the desired goals and identify the appropriate procedure
- The process used to win institutional commitment to the desired goals and appropriate procedure

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

Much of what was addressed in the previous section applies to this Criterion. The process used by the GERC was, in general, an iterative one, with a great deal of emphasis and value placed on input from our numerous stakeholders, including faculty, students, alums, and other members of the university and broader community. Our process was also guided by many of the questions outlined in the *AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review*. The question, for example, of which student learning objectives we were committed to for all students guided our process. This was a particularly significant question given our diverse student population, large number of non-traditional and commuter students, and large number of transfer students. We placed value on developing a General Education experience that would have an impact on all of these students, even those who would only attend EMU for a year or two in order to complete a major or professional program. It was also clear to us, both from our research and from our experiences in our own disciplines, that we needed to prepare students for an increasingly global and diverse workplace and world, hence “Education for Participation in the Global Community.” We recognized, early on, the need for a strong emphasis on communication skills, quantitative reasoning skills, and critical thinking in order to equip students for lifelong learning. Our outcomes in all of the categories of the program reflect these values. Further, through student and faculty input, we came to recognize the importance of developing a coherent and intentional program. The previous basic studies program was essentially a distribution requirement with no explicit framework or rationale. We heard from numerous faculty members that they had difficulty placing themselves and their courses within the program and we discerned a general failure to articulate to students any rationale for the program. Students were being advised to take courses simply “to get requirements out of the way.” There was no identification of what these courses might provide or what they might contribute to the students’ overall educational experience. Preparation for and connection to students’ majors certainly were not being emphasized, nor was the value of General Education, more generally, as preparation for the workplace and world.

While we were beginning the process of General Education reform, we were also, as an institution, beginning our involvement in AQIP. What was being emphasized with AQIP—a focus on process, the use of facts and measurements for making decisions, a focus on continuous improvement, and emphasis on integration—also made a great deal of sense for General Education reform. These became core values of the GERC, which was the primary entity involved with identifying goals and a procedure to address our institution’s need for reform in General Education. The GERC was also committed from the start to engaging in thorough research in order to carry out its charge. As mentioned previously, the committee began its work by visiting every academic department on campus, as well as Faculty Council and the EMU AAUP. Members of the committee also met with personnel from the Divisions of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management, community college counselors, EMU students, and EMU alumni to carry out an analysis of the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and threats (SCOT) in relation to the existing basic studies program. The committee considered it essential to seek the input and perspectives of all of these various constituencies and returned to them frequently throughout the reform process. The committee used to SCOT data, which really was foundational in its work, to identify and select desired goals for the reform. As it began analyzing the SCOT data, the committee also started to read books and articles addressing issues connected to General Education reform. The committee identified and brought to

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campus various nationally recognized experts on General Education, and it also began reviewing General Education programs at other universities. As they carried out the latter activity, committee members began identifying programs that would be useful to visit in person. While we identified many examples of “model” or “exemplary” programs, we resisted pursuing ideas just for the sake of distinguishing ourselves or developing a unique or unusual program. We were driven, instead, by our institutional context (our students, resources, etc.) as well as by the question of what knowledge and skills we, and our constituents, desired to see in our graduates. In a number of cases, our research suggested what we should not do. We saw numerous well-funded and supposedly exemplary programs that had failed to consider key aspects of their institutional contexts and had thus experienced significant problems and failures. Finally, we depended on Martha C. Nussbaum’s book, *Cultivating Humanity*, for the intellectual foundation of our program. Nussbaum’s book effectively captured and synthesized the goals and priorities that emerged from our SCOT analysis and other research. It also has played a seminal role throughout the implementation process in helping both faculty and staff understand the value of General Education in a twenty-first century university education.

While the committee relied on the results of the research it carried out to develop the goals and eventually the general framework for the new program, it returned to the faculty and its other constituents as it started the task of firming up this framework. After the committee formulated a broad set of goals for the program, it took these goals to the university community, holding a series of focus groups in the winter of 2003. In the spring, summer, and fall of 2003, the committee formulated and refined a proposal sensitive to all of the information collected from the SCOT analysis, focus groups, research, reading, and consultations. Initially there were two frameworks that met the established goals, but the committee worked to integrate these. The result was the framework for the new program, which has five categories: 1) Effective Communication, 2) Quantitative Reasoning (these first two categories consist of what is referred to as the foundation courses, which include courses in English composition, speech, and quantitative reasoning that all students must complete, ideally in their first year); 3) Knowledge of the Disciplines, with two courses required in each of the traditional arts and sciences disciplines—arts, humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences; 4) Perspectives on a Diverse World, with courses required in U.S. Diversity and Global Awareness; and 5) Learning Beyond the Classroom, with two requirements across six categories. The committee developed the initial outcomes for all of these categories and then invited “experts” to review and refine the outcomes. While there certainly was resistance, both to the notion of outcomes more generally and to particular outcomes for particular categories, the GERC sought and relied on input from numerous constituents on campus. There was also resistance initially to the co-curricular component, mostly centered on the logistics of implementation. The committee responded to this resistance by involving campus “experts” on systems and processes so as to reduce individuals’ anxieties about the logistics of this requirement.

Before “officially” presenting the final proposed curriculum, the GERC also developed a detailed implementation plan, which included a detailed structure for implementing the new curriculum that would involve faculty, staff, and students from across campus. The final “package” (see attached) was presented to the Faculty Council in Fall 2004, and members of the GERC attended numerous Faculty Council meetings in order to explain and answer questions about the curriculum. As with any change of this magnitude, concerns were expressed and some resistance occurred. The GERC addressed as many of the concerns as possible, and, throughout the implementation process, GERC members and the Gen Ed directive have continued meeting with various stakeholders to address particular issues, some of which simply were not or could not have been anticipated earlier. In short, the process has remained a staged and iterative one with opportunities build in for continual feedback and input; however, the curriculum itself has stood unchanged, as approved, with the understanding that modifications will occur only after an assessment is undertaken, which will happen upon full implementation. The responses, below, to Criterion Three and Four address implementation in detail along with the processes used to win institutional commitment and support for the goals and essence of the program.

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One final note about the GERC. Every member of this committee noted at some stage in the process how effectively the group had worked together—and how each individual member had put aside his/her personal interests and/or interests connected to particular colleges, departments, disciplines, or programs. The work this committee accomplished was truly collaborative and untainted by personal biases and interests. Every member seemed able to put aside those biases in the interest of the intellectual well-being of the students at EMU. Of course, the evidence of this is mostly anecdotal, but it is a claim that could be backed up easily through conversations with any of the members of this committee, all of whom felt very strongly about it.

Award Criteria

Criterion 3: Actions Taken

Describe the actions taken by your institution to achieve the goals and implement the procedure designed to address needs. Address the following issues:

- The individuals involved in the process
- The action steps identified
- The process used to gain faculty and administrative support and participation
- The process used to check progress

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

The implementation of the new General Education Program has involved numerous individuals from every area of the university. We realized, early on, that we needed a cultural shift within the institution in order to create the kind of General Education experience for students that the GERC envisioned. Therefore, many people have played a part in the process. This shift was initially facilitated by a transition team consisting of five members of the GERC. Two of these members, Ann Blakeslee and Margaret Crouch, became co-directors of implementation until the new Director of General Education was named.

In Winter 2005, the EMU Board of Regents approved the GERC General Education proposal, along with a detailed implementation document that had been prepared as part of the overall proposal (see attached). Both the curriculum and the plans for implementing it had gone through an exhaustive input and approval process, as explained above. This process was led by the GERC and supported by the provost. The initial goal of implementation was to help every member of the campus community attain the same level of familiarity with the new curriculum and with the ideals behind it that members of the GERC had attained. Another goal was to begin immediately to increase the numbers of faculty, staff, administrators, and students involved with the new program. One of the first steps for achieving these goals was putting in place the structure for implementation. This structure, which had been considered and refined in Faculty Council meetings and in meetings with other faculty and administrative groups, initially consisted of five subcommittees: (1) Course Vetting (CV) – responsible for evaluating requests for inclusion of courses in the General Education Program; (2) Writing-Intensive (WI) – responsible for evaluating upper-level courses in the major proposed for the WI designation; (3) Learning Beyond the Classroom (LBC) – responsible for evaluating events and activities proposed for inclusion under the LBC category; (4) Faculty and Staff Development (FSD) – responsible for providing focused, constructive discussion among faculty and staff concerning the creation of courses, outcomes-based learning, assessments, and other implementation issues; and (5) Assessment & Evaluation (AE) – responsible for assessing samplings of courses and making recommendations based upon the assessment data gathered. The memberships of all of the subcommittees were carefully considered with special concern given to representation from all of the colleges and from the staff and administration of all of the divisions of the university. Expertise was also a factor; for example, the course vetting subcommittee has representatives (“experts”) for all of the areas of the curriculum

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(e.g., diversity, global awareness, social sciences, arts, humanities, natural sciences, etc.). For purposes of continuity in transitioning from the development to the implementation of the new curriculum, representatives from the original GERC were asked to serve on, and in some cases chair, the various subcommittees, and representatives from the student body were also selected for some subcommittees. All faculty appointments were solicited and then approved by Faculty Council.

Additionally, it was recommended that an EMU faculty member involved with teaching General Education be appointed Director of General Education. Since EMU has a unionized faculty, it was recommended that this individual remain a member of the bargaining unit and not be an administrator (administrators are not members of our bargaining unit). The Director would chair the General Education Advisory Committee (GEAC), which was charged with overseeing the implementation, administration and evaluation of the General Education program with input from all of the subcommittees. GEAC membership included the chairs of all of the subcommittees along with ex-officio representation from the Divisions of Student Affairs and Enrollment Management and from the academic department heads (appointed by the provost). Initially, the co-directors of implementation chaired the GEAC until the General Education Director was named in Summer 2006.

Shortly into the implementation phase, a need emerged for additional involvement from individuals with particular kinds of administrative expertise. This need resulted in the formation of three task forces with membership from the administrative staff of the university. These task forces, which have played an important role in developing administrative policies for the new program, included Catalog and Program Development; Transfer; and Advising and Auditing.

Once the subcommittees and task forces were in place, a week-long Summer Institute was planned for all committee members. The purposes of the Summer Institute included familiarizing all of the members of the subcommittees and task forces with the new curriculum and providing an opportunity for the committees to understand their charges and to make decisions about how they would function. The Summer Institute was held June 20-24, 2005. Mornings consisted of presentations on and discussions of the various areas of the curriculum, including the rationales and outcomes for those areas, and afternoons consisted of working sessions in which participants thought about the work of their subcommittees in relation to what they had learned in the morning. The Summer Institute ended on a high note, with one senior faculty member claiming that it was the “most intellectually stimulating experience” of his 30-year tenure at EMU. The Summer Institute became a model for subsequent faculty development initiatives designed to educate faculty and staff about outcomes-based learning and the new curriculum (see attached). The forms and processes for submitting courses for the new program were refined and finalized during the Institute (see attached), and the subcommittees left the Institute poised to begin their work in Fall 2005.

Implementation was underway in earnest during the 2005-06 academic year—courses were being submitted for review by the Course Vetting and Writing Intensive subcommittees; LBC opportunities were being created; the Assessment & Evaluation subcommittee began the process of creating a five-year assessment plan; and the Faculty & Staff Development subcommittee had an ambitious agenda consisting of workshops, mini-institutes and retreats. Implementation, like reform, was very much a staged, step-by-step process guided by concerns with educating faculty, staff and other constituents (e.g., community college counselors) about the new program; with getting courses revised and developed to meet the outcomes for the new program; and with putting all of the needed plans in place for launching the program.

A series of institutes, workshops, meetings, and retreats were held to help faculty and staff become acquainted with the intentional structure and outcomes of the new General Education Program. Workshops were held to

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assist faculty members in re-thinking courses currently offered and in creating new courses. Cross-divisional mini-institutes were held to provide opportunities for faculty and staff members, and administrators, to understand and appreciate the role that each division (i.e., Academic Affairs, Enrollment Management, and Student Affairs) has in the new General Education Program. And in June 2006, a retreat was held to brainstorm innovative ways to launch the new program and to convey its value to both internal and external constituencies. In all of these various initiatives, increasing numbers of faculty and staff members were involved as presenters and facilitators as their familiarity with and commitment to the new program increased. In fact, this has been one of the more noteworthy and exciting aspects of implementation—watching interest and investment in the new program increase and seeing increasing numbers of faculty and staff become advocates and promoters. A number of these individuals had even resisted the program at the outset. In short, the processes of educating faculty and staff about the program and gaining adherents and supporters have been productive and very rewarding. Changing a university culture requires a deliberate and carefully thought out process. We believe that this is something we have achieved.

Finally, it was also in June 2006 that the search for a General Education Director was undertaken. Chris Foreman, professor in the Communication & Theatre Arts Department, was appointed the full-time General Education Director. A General Education Office was established, and Chris assumed the role of chair of the GEAC. Since June 2006, she has worked closely with all of the subcommittees and task forces, along with the GEAC, in preparation for the Fall 2007 launch of the new curriculum. She has held a number of General Education Overview sessions open to all faculty, staff, administrators, and students. She has established yearly goals for all subcommittees and task forces and, with support from GEAC, monitors their progress closely. She has worked closely with the Academic Advising Center as they prepared for and began registering students for the Fall 2007 academic year. And she regularly meets with a General Education Systems Process Team that she established. This team is responsible for establishing and putting in place systems checks for all students—entering first-year students as well as transfer students—from their admission through graduation.

Award Criteria

Criterion 4: Evidence of Improvement and Continuing Commitment to the Processes

Provide evidence of the success of your improvement strategy and your institution's continuing commitment to the goals and processes used. Address the following issues:

- A description of the results of your activities
- An explanation of how the results address the needs
- An explanation of how the institution is improved by the results
- Evidence or justification of your improvement claims
- Evidence of on-going commitment to the improvements

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.

There has been much accomplished since the new General Education Program was approved by the University Board of Regents in January 2005. The approvals by the university Faculty Council and Board of Regents officially launched the implementation process, with the official start of the program scheduled for Fall 2007.

The implementation process, like the reform process, has been both faculty led and faculty driven. The goal from the start of this process was to educate faculty and staff about the new program and to help everyone on campus attain the same familiarity with the program and with the goals and ideals behind it that the GERC had when it completed its work. The GERC also wished to make the transition to implementation as seamless as possible. As

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a result, a subset of the original reform committee remained very involved with implementation while at the same time moving quickly to expand the circle and involve as many faculty and staff members, administrators, and students as possible in the implementation process. The results, we believe, point to the success of this process and the approach that was taken to it. Below is a list of some of the key milestones and achievements during the implementation process, along with narratives, and evidence, about how these achievements address the original needs and how EMU has and is being improved as a result.

Since the official approval of “Education for Participation in the Global Community,” in January 2005,

- ❑ More than 130 courses have been revised or created and subsequently approved for inclusion in the General Education Program. The vetting process has been a rigorous one designed to ensure that each course addresses all of the outcomes for a category and provides significant learning experiences that demonstrate student achievement of the outcomes. The revision of so many courses, and the creation of new courses, has been especially significant since the former Basics Studies program did not encourage either the review or revision of courses. Further, with the institutions’ emerging emphasis on and concern with assessment and continuous improvement, the need for faculty to consider (and re-consider) how students will be assessed in their courses—how students’ achievement of the outcomes will be demonstrated—has contributed to the cultural shift in regard to assessment (and “closing the loop”) that is slowly occurring at the university.

While many faculty members have complained that the vetting process is somewhat arduous, most have also acknowledged its value in helping them rethink and re-vision their courses in productive ways. The vetting process has also prompted productive exchanges between faculty. This has had the added benefit of helping some faculty think about interdisciplinary and linked-course opportunities. In keeping with this,

- ❑ An Interdisciplinary Initiative was recently launched with support for proposals for interdisciplinary courses or clusters of courses to be offered in the new program.
- ❑ The provost has also created a faculty release position dedicated to interdisciplinary initiatives. This individual will assist with encouraging interdisciplinary proposals for the new General Education programs as well as for other programs within the university.

Numerous courses have also been revised or developed to meet the new writing intensive course requirement in majors and the Learning Beyond the Classroom requirement.

- ❑ All academic programs have identified Writing-Intensive courses, with approximately 50 courses already approved. The Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) program, which was started in 2000, has refocused its efforts to support the new WI requirement. The outcomes for the writing intensive course requirement are concerned with helping students become flexible writers who understand the genres and writing conventions of their fields and who can communicate effectively to general and professional audiences.
- ❑ More than 100 Learning Beyond the Classroom experiences and/or courses have been approved for each of the six LBC areas. The Learning Beyond the Classroom category emphasizes making General Education a four-year experience (all transfer students will also have at least one LBC requirement at EMU), valuing co-curricular experiences, and valuing the learning that occurs outside of the classroom. This is a particularly unique component of our new program that provides students with opportunities that they might not otherwise have, especially at a large university. The outcomes for each of the six categories reflect key values for a well-rounded undergraduate experience.

The implementation of the new General Education program has also reinvigorated faculty development. The intent from the start was to make faculty development for General Education an intellectual activity. All FSD initiatives – institutes, workshops, meetings, and retreats – have been designed and facilitated with this goal in

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mind. As a result, there has been a shift in the culture of faculty development from a more punitive approach focused on faculty members who are having difficulties in the classroom to one that celebrates the diversity and intellectual richness of our faculty. To date, more than 200 faculty members have participated in one or more Gen Ed faculty development initiatives, and numerous full- and part-time instructors and staff have also participated in these initiatives. In addition,

- ❑ Over 700 members of the campus community have attended one or more of the workshops, institutes, mini-institutes, retreats, discussions groups, and presentations facilitated through the Faculty & Staff Development subcommittee. A systematic, staged approach, with offerings appropriate to each of the various stages of implementation, has been taken to prepare the campus community for the new program and to enact a cultural shift in the learning environment of the institution.
- ❑ As an example of later-stage offerings, “Teaching Gen Ed” workshops have been scheduled throughout Summer 2007 to orient faculty and adjuncts to teaching courses in the new curriculum. Participants will engage in dialogues about the intentionality of the program and the outcomes-based nature of the curriculum. They will also work individually and in small groups to adapt course content into significant learning experiences that address the Gen Ed outcomes and to develop effective assessment methods to ascertain student success in achieving the outcomes.
- ❑ As yet another example of some of the innovative faculty development initiatives that have been undertaken as a result of the new program, Communities of Practice are being established around each of the primary areas of the General Education Program. Faculty members have been identified to chair these communities and to facilitate dialogues and activities designed to enhance the intellectual and pedagogical missions of the General Education Program.

In addition to working closely with internal constituents throughout the reform and implementation processes, the Gen Ed director and subcommittees have also worked with an important external constituent—community colleges. EMU has a significant transfer population. In fact, one of the initial reasons for revising the General Education program had to do with improving transfer: in the previous program, equivalencies were worked out on a case-by-case and often idiosyncratic basis and there were numerous “additional,” and sometimes hidden, requirements. Transfer is now much easier with a much more extensive list of allowable courses, and, more recently, several of our community college partners have even asked that we share with their campus communities our expertise in developing an outcomes-based curriculum.

- ❑ Dr. Foreman, General Education Director, in conjunction with members of the Faculty & Staff Development subcommittee has met with college counselors at EMU’s top ten community college partners. Transfer policies, transfer guides, and equivalency lists have been created reflecting the new curriculum, all intended to ease the process of transfer (see Community College Partners at www.emich.edu/gened).

Another key concern at EMU is retention. This past January, a Retention Council was formed, their charge being to propose initiatives designed to increase student retention. One of the subcommittee’s formed, The Undergraduate Experience, has decided that they will use *Education for Participation in the Global Community* as the foundation for creating or re-designing meaningful experiences for EMU students. One of their primary goals is to establish a first-year experience that will help students better understand the value and intentionality of their General Education experience. Some other specific initiatives that are being launched include the following:

- ❑ Two dozen faculty will take part in a pilot Faculty Partners Program, wherein they will mentor first-year students to help them transition to the university and to advise and assist them with General Education.
- ❑ The new General Education program will be a main feature at this year’s New Student Orientation. Students and parents will participate in a number of sessions designed to engage them in dialogues about the value and importance of a broad-based General Education.

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The new program has also made significant contributions to assessment on campus. Assessment and continuous improvement were ideals expressed by the GERC that have been carried forward into implementation and are now influencing other assessment initiatives on campus.

- ❑ An AQIP General Education Team was formed in 2006 to identify framing principles for assessing the General Education foundation courses; e.g., Written Composition (ENGL 121); Oral Communication (CTAS 124); and Quantitative Reasoning (MATH 110). The team formulated a three-phase process, with phase one and two already complete.
- ❑ An Assessment Development project is underway where faculty participants will develop a rubric to measure learning outcomes in specified General Education courses. This pilot project is part of the General Education Assessment Subcommittee's plans to implement an ePortfolio-based assessment beginning in the Fall 2007 semester.
- ❑ Within five years after officially launching the General Education Program, a committee of assessment specialists from both inside and outside the university will work with the Gen Ed Assessment and Course Vetting subcommittees to prepare an evaluation report for the university community. Based on recommendations included in the report, modifications may be made to the program.

Overall, we believe that the intellectual and educational climate at EMU already has and will continue being enhanced by the new program.

- ❑ At a recent meeting with EMU alumni and members of the EMU foundation, one alumnus noted, "this curriculum will make our graduates more nimble," thus better preparing them for the realities of the diverse global community in which they will live and work.
- ❑ Plans are underway to develop a Center for Innovative Pedagogy, with the goal of increasing awareness about the opportunities that exist for faculty to provide better instruction for better learning, both in General Education and in majors. With the General Education program at its core, this center will bring together academic advising, faculty development, a center for university writing, service learning, undergraduate experience programs, program assessment, and other student-centered programs to promote integration within students' educational experiences and connections between faculty, students, and learning.

The creation and implementation of Eastern Michigan's new General Education Program - *Education for Participation in the Global Community* – has always been about a commitment to provide significant learning experiences for students. The outcomes-based curriculum will provide integrated and common student learning experiences – both in and outside of the classroom – to better prepare students for graduation and beyond. The program is conducive to ongoing assessment and continuous improvement. As one faculty member put it, "We will never again need to completely redo General Education. This is a program that can be continually refined and improved based on assessment data." All assessments of the program will require and lead to empirically-driven improvements that will essentially "close the loop" and continue strengthening the overall quality and integrity of the program and of students' experiences with it.