

ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES

2008 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education: Effective Program Processes

Section #1: Contact Information of Person Submitting Application

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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.

Founded in 1960, Miami Dade College (MDC) consists of eight campuses that enroll nearly 160,000 students annually, including more Hispanic and African-American undergraduates than any other college in the nation. MDC offers associate degrees and certificates in more than 200 areas, as well as bachelor's degrees in education, public safety management, and nursing.

This multicampus, geographically-dispersed institution has been able to facilitate and implement general education initiatives through a genuinely faculty-led process that reflects the mission of the institution. The result has been a revision of MDC's original set of 25 General Education Goals and the adoption of a new set of 10 College Learning Outcomes that are broad, multidisciplinary, and span all programs. These outcomes provide a foundation for learning at MDC that is consistent with today's workforce, global, and technological demands.

MDC's process has become a role model for other institutions and is deserving of a C1 award.

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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 produce evidence that graduates acquired the general education knowledge and skills expected by the institution and its stakeholders for awarding its degrees (J2). 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 January, 2005, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) submitted its recommendations to MDC based on its 10-year review. In its review, the SACS Visiting Committee recommended "that the institution provide evidence that graduates have attained the identified general education competencies." In response to this recommendation, the College sent a group of faculty and administrative representatives to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) General Education and Assessment Conference in February, 2005, to identify novel ways to conduct authentic assessment. As a result of their participation in the conference, the group noted that (a) the 25 general education objectives in the 2004-2006 Miami Dade College Catalog were outdated, as these had been developed over thirty years ago; (b) there were too many general education outcomes to develop an effective assessment process; (c) many of the outcomes were not measurable; (d) the outcomes were each clearly linked to a specific course on the general education course menu; and (d) there was a certain amount of redundancy among the 25 outcomes.

In March, 2005, the entire College community met for the annual Conference Day (a professional development day for all College faculty and staff). During Conference Day 2005, two consultants, Dr. Douglas Eder and Dr. Patrick Nellis presented to the Campus Presidents, Academic Deans, Student Deans, and selected disciplines on approaches to outcomes assessment. It remained evident that the general education outcomes would have to be revised in order to develop an efficient assessment process.

In May, 2005, a team of twelve faculty and administrators attended the AAC&U Institute on General Education to consider the process that would result in the revision of MDC's general education objectives. At the conclusion of the Institute, the team prepared a report for the Institute's staff, and upon their return, the team shared the report with Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón (College President), Dr. Norma Martin Goonen (Provost for Academic and Student Affairs), and the campus presidents. Dr. Padrón charged the team to provide the

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leadership needed to begin a Collegewide conversation about MDC's general education outcomes. Two of the faculty participating on the Institute team, Dr. Lenore P. Rodicio and Prof. Rene Martin, along with Dr. Padrón provided a presentation to the College community via videotape at each Campus Convocation at the beginning of the Fall, 2005, term. In December, 2005, Dr. Goonen officially appointed a General Education Team comprised primarily of faculty members from various disciplines and campuses, as well as key administrators. Several of those on the Institute team continued their leadership roles in this newly formed team.

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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:

- 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.

In July, 2005, Dr. Peggy Maki, who has published extensively on assessment, met with several General Education Team members and administrators to outline a process for the purpose of revising the general education outcomes. In November, 2005, Dr. Maki returned to help the College initiate the process through three presentations to the faculty and administration. The first was part of the Provost's Symposium Series, and was presented to a wide faculty audience across all campuses. The second was a workshop for student affairs administrators and staff. The third was a one-day retreat attended by selected faculty members, discipline conveners, and several administrators. At the conclusion of her visit, the College community was aware of a critical need for general education reform.

In December, 2005, all the College departments, disciplines, and schools initiated discussions regarding general education outcomes to determine the most critical outcomes that all students should attain irrespective of their major program of study. These conversations were carried out through individual departmental meetings, and most importantly through discipline and school meetings during MDC's 2006 Conference Day. At the end of Conference Day, most disciplines had generated a preliminary list of general education outcomes.

On March 31, 2006, faculty members and chairpersons from all disciplines and schools, together with the academic leadership, met for a General Education Summit facilitated by Dr. Peggy Maki. As a participant in the AACU's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Campus Action Network, MDC relied heavily on the research conducted by AACU on general education outcomes to develop its final Collegewide list. During the summit, discipline and school representatives were given the following guidelines for development of the outcome statements: outcomes should be (a) fewer rather than many; (b) broad and general rather than specific; (c) interdisciplinary; and (d) measurable. At the end of the one-day summit, a preliminary list of Collegewide outcomes was developed.

In April, 2006, the co-chairs of the General Education Team began to meet periodically with the Academic Leadership Council to apprise them of the timeline for completing the

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revision process. The process would include a revision of the preliminary list, followed by a series of surveys provided to faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Once the approval of the Academic Leadership Council was obtained, the General Education Team proceeded with the revisions.

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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.

During the month of April, 2006, the General Education Team met to revise the list of outcomes. In May, 2006, the revised list was sent out to faculty, staff, and administrators for feedback. The survey asked respondents to rate the broadness, interdisciplinary nature, and measurability of the outcomes. In addition, respondents had the opportunity to offer feedback on the wording and content of each outcome statement. In response to the survey results, the General Education Team further refined the list of outcomes. In June, 2006, students were asked to respond to a similar survey, and in August, 2006, faculty, staff, and administrators responded to a final survey. The list of outcomes was then validated by a comparison with the LEAP liberal education outcomes that were identified by AAC&U in consultation with education and business leaders. MDC's outcomes statements were found to be in alignment with the LEAP outcomes.

In September, 2006, the outcome statements were finalized and introduced into the College's approval process for academic and student-related matters. During that month, the list of Outcomes was approved by the Academic Leadership Council and the Campuses' College Academic and Student Support Council (CASSC). In October, 2006, the final approval of the Collegewide CASSC resulted in the official adoption of the following General Education Outcomes:

Through the academic disciplines and co-curricular activities, General Education provides multiple, varied, and intentional learning experiences to facilitate the acquisition of fundamental knowledge and skills and the development of attitudes that foster effective citizenship and life-long learning. As graduates of Miami Dade College, students will be able to:

1. Communicate effectively using listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
2. Use quantitative analytical skills to evaluate and process numerical data.
3. Solve problems using critical and creative thinking and scientific reasoning.
4. Formulate strategies to locate, evaluate, and apply information.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures, including global and historical perspectives.
6. Create strategies that can be used to fulfill personal, civic, and social responsibilities.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical thinking and its application to issues in society.

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8. Use computer and emerging technologies effectively.
9. Demonstrate an appreciation for aesthetics and creative activities.
10. Describe how natural systems function and recognize the impact of humans on the environment

In the Summer of 2007, Dr. Padrón and the campus presidents recognized the need to gather all faculty to engage in a conversation about the College's new outcomes and how to best incorporate intentional learning experiences into the classroom to reinforce student attainment of the outcomes. As a result, *General Education and Assessment: An Academic Dialogue* was coordinated through the General Education Team. This one-day faculty-led conference consisted of faculty panel-discussions on classroom and assessment techniques related to each of the outcomes. Shortly after the conference, Dr. Padrón and the academic leadership of the College noted that the scope of the outcomes was such that they were not only attained through courses on the general education menu, but were an integral component of all courses at the College. In September, 2007, the General Education Outcomes were renamed College Learning Outcomes, and the General Education Team was reorganized into a permanent Learning Outcomes Coordinating Council (LOCC).

In recognition of the College's commitment to the College Learning Outcomes, a Learning Outcomes Covenant signing was celebrated on October 19, 2007. The signatories included Dr. Padrón, Dr. Helen Aguirre Ferrer (Chairperson, Board of Trustees), Dr. Goonen, and representatives from the faculty, student body, and local business community. The signing ceremony was witnessed by the U.S. Under Secretary of Education. The Covenant received the League for Innovations "Innovation of the Year 2007-2008" award on May 2, 2008.

Currently, the College community is actively engaged in a curriculum mapping process to identify the courses and extracurricular student activities that incorporate each of the outcomes. The mapping process will aid in identifying strengths and gaps in the teaching/learning process that enables students to attain the College Learning Outcomes.

The College's exemplary process was recently published in an article by Dr. Padrón, "Celebrating Outcomes and Cultivating Assessments," in the Spring, 2008 issue of *Liberal Education*.

A summary timeline of the entire process and a list of former and current members of the Learning Outcomes Coordinating Council can be found at:

<http://www.mdc.edu/learningoutcomes/>.

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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.

Once the Learning Outcomes were established and the curriculum mapping process was in place, MDC recognized the importance of developing and sustaining an assessment practice in the College's complex, multicampus system. The College also recognized, however, that implementing this practice might evoke resistance, especially among those closest to the teaching and learning event – the faculty. As a strategy to facilitate faculty engagement across eight campuses, the College established an assessment infrastructure that included two key features: an assessment philosophy that rested on seven tenets about assessment at the College and an intercampus assessment design strategy that positioned faculty as the “drivers” behind the initiative.

In August 2006, the Provost for Academic and Student Affairs invited faculty members from various disciplines across the College to participate as members of Miami Dade College's (MDC) Learning Outcomes Assessment Team. This move represented the next phase in MDC's Learning Outcomes program development initiatives and provided an opportunity to gather evidence about students' attainment of MDC's learning outcomes.

After the 2006-2007 Team was approved by the Academic Leadership Council and appointed by the Provost, the Associate Provosts for Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness (IE) with the support of College Training and Development (CT&D) coordinated a General Education Outcomes Assessment Retreat on September 29–30, 2006. At the Retreat, nationally known experts facilitated the Team's work in developing assessment tools including scoring rubrics and performance-based assessment tasks.

From November 2006 – May 2007, the Team, with continued support from the District Offices of IE and Academic Affairs, participated in a variety of institution-level assessment activities such as (1) identifying students and classes to include in the assessment sample, (2) surveying faculty proctors and students, (3) developing anchor papers, (4) scoring assessments, (5) analyzing evidence of validity, and (6) sharing assessment results with colleagues at Conference Day 2007, a professional development convening of faculty and staff from all eight campuses on one of the larger campuses.

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Five tasks with accompanying rubrics were developed to cover nine of the ten MDC learning outcomes. Most of the tasks covered more than one of the outcomes and all required students to integrate and apply knowledge and abilities to complete the tasks. The tenth outcome was assessed using a commercially developed Computer Skills Test.

The tasks were field tested in October, revised and administered in selected classrooms at the end of Fall Term 2006.

The District President of Miami Dade College, Dr. Eduardo J. Padrón, has demonstrated a strong commitment to assessment by not only inspiring interest in the process but also allocating resources to support this institutional work. Since this endeavor is linked to the College's Strategic Plan, a campus president, the Provost for Academic and Student Affairs and the Associate Provost for Institutional Effectiveness coordinate this work as a student success initiative.

The College employed a District Director of Learning Outcomes Assessment to coordinate activities across this multicampus institution. The Director's role and responsibilities are under the auspices of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and include facilitating the work of the faculty-driven Assessment Team whose members have collective expertise in outcomes-based assessment and assessment practice.

In addition, the Provost for Academic and Student Affairs appointed a Learning Outcomes Coordinating Council (LOCC) to oversee all initiatives related to learning outcomes and assessment. The Council is comprised of primarily faculty with representation from academic and student affairs administrators. CTD provides support by coordinating workshops and consultants.

The first round of assessments was administered to graduating students. Assessment results were reported in aggregate and established benchmark data to inform the college dialogue about curricular and co-curricular learning experiences related to the ten outcomes and student attainment of those outcomes. These data revealed the need for particular emphasis on a number of outcomes including critical thinking, quantitative analysis and appreciation for aesthetics and creative expression. Students were least likely to perform up to the faculty's expectations in these areas. The assessments also revealed that students demonstrated the highest proficiencies in scientific and environmental literacy, social responsibilities, ethical thinking, and computer competency outcomes.

In terms of the assessment process, most faculty demonstrated a willingness to support these college assessment initiatives by participating in pilots, motivating students and administering tasks within their classrooms. Faculty also provided observation notes and important suggestions to improve the process.

The results from this first administration were shared during the College's Annual

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Conference Day 2007. Each discipline, school, and the student services division reviewed and discussed the results and how course competencies and curricular as well as co-curricular experiences contributed to the attainment of learning outcomes. Specific actions were identified to enhance students' attainment of the outcomes prior to graduation through greater intentionality in addressing these outcomes, introduction to performance-based assessments in courses, and formative student-centered assessment strategies for the classroom and beyond.