Award Information and Application:
Program Improvement- Revision or Enhancement of Core Program

National and international education officials, accreditors, and faculty leaders increasingly associate “quality” education with student learning outcomes and continuous quality improvement processes. Moving away from the view of education as a simple act of passing a static body of knowledge from faculty to students, they value education practiced as a commitment to a set of collectively-practiced, ongoing activities: making institutional choices about the most important goals for student learning and defining the learning in terms of desired outcomes; developing a shared faculty commitment to actions such as high impact, active learning strategies and faculty development designed to increase student achievement; making informed judgments about student achievement and the impact of various general education program support processes; and ensuring continuous improvements in the educational program. Despite the commitment of academic leaders and accreditors to these processes, too few institutions have succeeded in applying systematic improvement processes to the general education program. As a result, discussions about higher education accountability and improvement conclude that higher education can benefit from models of innovative, effective, and systematic general education program improvements and assessments.

The Association for General and Liberal Studies is the national organization whose mission is singularly committed to quality general education programs and their central role in the liberal education of students. The organization invites institutions to apply for the 2019 AGLS Award for Improving General Education: Exemplary Program Processes. The Award promotes institutional commitment to continuous quality improvement, recognizes faculty and institutions that practice quality behaviors, and provides much needed examples of effective general education improvement processes. One option for the 2019 Award will recognize institutions that implement program revisions that lead to verifiable general education learning achievement. AGLS will recognize up to three institutions that have successfully and collegially implemented a significant program revision that is systematically producing evidence of general education learning. The Awards will be presented during the 2019 Annual AGLS Constitute, September 20 & 21 in Orlando, Florida. Representatives from recognized institutions will be asked to present their assessment processes in an identified special session and, if possible, provide a poster presentation for display throughout the constitute. Recipients will receive the following: a plaque recognizing their successes; recognition on the AGLS website, listserv, and other publications; half-priced Orlando constitute registration for the presenters; and a year’s membership in AGLS for each presenter.

Award Selection and Criteria

Applications will be reviewed by an Awards Committee comprised of AGLS Executive Council members, members of accrediting associations, and recognized leaders in general education. The application narrative questions are based on the Systems Analysis questions found in the AGLS publication, Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review (see www.agls.org for a free download). Evaluation will focus on the extent to which an institution demonstrates a commitment to common student learning objectives through their development of a new program (Guide question C1) and on how well the narrative details can serve as a practical model for other institutions. Previous winning applications and the AGLS Guide can be found on the AGLS website: www.agls.org/agls-awards/exemplary-program-awards. Exemplary award applications are meant to serve as a best practice guide for other institutions. As such, the award committee will recognize only those applications that clearly describe each step of the program development process. Most importantly, the Awards Committee will be looking for evidence that program changes are leading to improved general education learning. The best examples will offer multiple iterations of assessment data.
ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES
2019 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education:
Exemplary Program Processes

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. The application should clearly present the creative solutions and leadership methods used to address the issues, concerns, and goals relevant to improving student general education learning through assessment. Supporting material can be summarized as part of the application and narrative but limit your explanations to two pages per criterion. Please do not use links to data and analysis reports; narrative summary of your key results and processes, within the application, is preferable to links that eventually become inoperable. AGLS offers model narratives as examples of success and assumes that recognized institutions will share with interested institutions additional data or information about recognized processes. Acceptance of the Award implies a willingness to share information and suggestions with other institutions.

Award Timeline

April 8    Application materials available on AGLS website
June 15   Materials must be received by AGLS
June 20   Materials distributed to review panel
August 1  Recipients notified
September 21 Recipients’ presentations and awards during 2019 AGLS Annual Constitute in Orlando, FL

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.

Share Your Story
We encourage you to submit a proposal to the constitute related to your submission. This ensures you will be present to accept the award if selected, AND nationally highlight programs that are dedicated to improving general education.

Application Submission
Applications may be submitted as e-mail attachments in Microsoft Word or Adobe Acrobat format, sent to Joyce Lucke at execdir@agls.org (preferred). Applications can also be mailed to:

Joyce Lucke, Executive Director
Association for General and Liberal Studies
428 Fifth Street
Columbus, IN 47201
ASSOCIATION FOR GENERAL AND LIBERAL STUDIES
2019 AGLS Awards for Improving General Education:
Exemplary Program Processes

Section #1: Contact Information of Person Submitting Application

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Jeffrey Thomas</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Director of General Education and Associate Professor of Biology</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Queens University of Charlotte</td>
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<td>Department/Program</td>
<td>University Programs</td>
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<td>Street Address</td>
<td>1900 Selwyn Ave</td>
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<td>Email</td>
<td><a href="mailto:thomasj@queens.edu">thomasj@queens.edu</a></td>
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Section #2: Institutional Endorsement
Chief Executive Officer or Chief Academic Officer

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sarah Fatherly</th>
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<tr>
<td>Title</td>
<td>Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institution</td>
<td>Queens University of Charlotte</td>
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Section #3: Application Summary
Include a summary of the award application. 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 will increase as necessary.
In 2011, Queens University of Charlotte, a comprehensive liberal arts university in the heart of Charlotte, NC, embarked on a new strategic plan that focused on academic quality and student success. General education reform was at the heart of this process and in 2012, a new general education task force began working with stakeholders from across the university to envision a new curriculum. After two years of extensive work, our general education committee secured university faculty approval for a completely reimagined general education program anchored by a variety high impact practices through which all our undergraduate populations are guaranteed to move—transfer, adult, and traditional. After a set of pilot courses ran in the spring of 2015, the new curriculum was launched in 2015 and has had measurable impacts on integrative learning, access to civic engagement, and increased retention rates across all demographics at our institution.

Section #4: Award Criteria

Criterion 1: Identifying the need for new program creation or revision

An exemplary application should clearly describe why a program development or review process was undertaken. In addition, the application should clearly describe why the program is important to stakeholders. The application should clearly detail the processes essential to engaging all key players in a dialogue to operationally define the goals of the program revision.

Provide a description of how your institution identified its need to design or revise a general education program and commit to common general education outcomes. Address the following issues:

- The learning need at your institution, including the context for the issue and the relevance of the need to institutional mission and values
- The process your institution used to identify the need (e.g., review of assessment practices by a campus committee, visit by an accrediting agency, etc.) and operationally define this need
- The way your institution communicated this need to faculty, staff, students, and other interested parties, and the process the institution used to create ownership of the issues

*Please limit your response to two pages.* The following text box will increase as necessary.
For nearly 25 years, the Core Program in the Liberal Arts was a cherished component of the General Education program at Queens University of Charlotte. It was designed to be an interdisciplinary and developmental program that challenged students to address perennial questions of ethical, civic, and moral importance with an emphasis on critical thinking, reading, and communication. Initially the curriculum included seven courses, but over time that number decreased to merely four as an array of distribution requirements were instead added to the curriculum. Many of these changes occurred in conjunction with larger institutional developments, including the shift from being a small liberal arts college to a comprehensive university. Student demographics were also undergoing changes during this time, with the Queens population more accurately representing the demographics in the southeast.

In 2011, the university began defining a new five-year strategic plan that was intended to focus on improving academic quality and student success. Revising and improving general education was identified as an important priority for this plan. Throughout 2011–2012, a strategic initiative committee assessed the strengths and weakness of the program by examining its limited assessment data and interviewing stakeholders across campus. Several key factors came quickly to the surface during this process:

1) First-year retention rates were unsatisfactory for an institution of our size and type. While many issues contributed to this lackluster retention, general education’s role in the problem was prominent as the first two courses in that curriculum were among the key barrier courses to student success with some of the highest percentages of D/F/Ws. Moreover, as those course instructors were serving as the new student advising team, clearly things were happening both in and out of class that were resulting in poor student persistence. Compounding the situation was that when retention rates were disaggregated, it was clear that the increasing numbers of our students from racial/ethnic minority, first-generation, and low socio-economic backgrounds were experiencing dramatically higher rates of academic failure and lower persistence than their majority background peers.

2) The Core curriculum and the distribution requirements for general education were in fact three related but distinct general education curricula: one set of requirements for traditional, first-time-in-college students, one for transfer students, and yet a third for post-traditional students. None of the curricula had defined, program level student learning outcomes and so there really was no coherence to the curriculum design or assessment of it. Even for a small institution with some 1,500 undergraduate students, this level of complexity was untenable and created persistent inconsistencies in advising, staffing, assessment, and access.

Coming out of this initial evaluation of the general education landscape at the university, the strategic initiative task force recommended that general education be significantly overhauled so that we could have an integrated and coherent general education program with clearly defined and leveled learning outcomes that reflected both the mission of the university and best practices in the field. The university administration, board of trustees, and faculty all endorsed this goal and began the process of gathering data, additional feedback, and defining the process by which this revision would be undertaken.

The first step towards revision was the creation of a specific taskforce charged with the new curriculum design. In fall of 2012, the Provost tasked the Associate Provost with its formation as she had extensive background in this area. The taskforce purposefully included a wide array of faculty stakeholders that represented all of the major academic units on campus, a cross section of junior and senior faculty as well as a mix of colleagues who had and had not taught in the existing program. This group began laying out the groundwork for a plan to engage the campus in conversations about their aspirations for general education’s outcomes for our students. The general education director and members of the general education task force met with groups of faculty from across the university, academic staff, and focus groups of students to listen
to their thoughts about their desired priorities for general education. Coming out of these meetings, the task force organized key themes from the responses and developed general education “traditions & values” document that emphasized the key criteria that would help guide and inform the design of the new curriculum. This document acknowledged key characteristics that the campus community wanted to see reflected in the new curriculum, notably that it would be learner-centered, grounded in the liberal arts, committed to community engagement, integrative by design, and highly collaborative. In this way, the general education task force was able to use the insights from those campus-wide conversations to inform the design of the new general education program.

Award Criteria

Criterion 2: Identification of Goals and Procedure Used to Address Needs
An exemplary application clearly delineates a research-based process to address the identified needs of the institution, and how the goals of the new program align with institutional mission. In addition, the application should clearly describe a model that engages a significant number of stakeholders and decision-makers in the program development process.

Describe how your institution identified and approved its new goals and the procedure used to address the need identified in Criterion 1 above. Address the following issues:
• The research used to identify the desired goals and the procedures to most effectively address the need
• The participants who identified the new program learning goals and related instructional practices
• The alignment of the desired program goals and related instructional practices to the institution’s mission
• The consistency of the review and approval procedures with existing processes and any new activities or processes required to gain approval

*Please limit your response to two pages.* The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.
As the general education task force moved from visioning conversations to curriculum ideation, we used multiple sources of information to ground and inform our work. The first source was the materials that had been generated from the campus listening sessions. The second set of information came from the taskforce identifying a set of core higher education readings to consider together that provided grounding in high impact practices, curriculum design, organizational change, undergraduate career readiness studies, and student success trends. Third, it was important for us to ensure that we were grounded in the story of our institution, so we used NSSE and SSI results, retention data sets, and strategic planning resources. And last, we considered multiple examples of integrative curricula from peer and aspirant institutions.

Following study of these varied sources, the task force decided to send a subset of the group, including the Associate Provost and general education director, to the AAC&U General Education & Assessment summer institute in 2013. The smaller group’s charge was to use insights from the various sources of information and inspiration to draft assessable student learning outcomes. On returning to campus, these full task force clarified the language of these outcomes before having them affirmed by the whole taskforce and by the university faculty as part of curriculum approval processes. Once the whole taskforce had a set of articulated outcomes, they subdivided into three teams. Each team was charged with creating one possible curriculum model. As they developed these models, they were asked to articulate how the proposed curriculum aligned with the information from the “traditions” document, the mission of the university, and the learning outcomes. Over multiple days, teams met and created their vision for the possible new curriculum. The models were presented to the entire taskforce and these three curricular options were evaluated for feasibility and their ability to address the learning outcomes of the program. Two were judged to be viable. In the fall of 2013, these two models were socialized via email and open forums with university faculty in order to seek feedback ahead of bringing the models to a formal university faculty meeting. The task force used the comments to refine the two models, brought them to the full faculty for discussion, and then worked with the Faculty Council (our faculty leadership group) to call for a preferencing vote of the full faculty. This was a new approach for our university for curriculum approval; the idea was that this way the faculty would be able to compare and contrast two different models with one another, see refinements being made to the designs based on their feedback, and then vote on which of the two models they preferred. Once a model was preferred, the taskforce solicited final feedback and crafted an official proposal of the curriculum, with staffing models to share with the university administration and with the university’s academic policy committee. A model was approved by the faculty in early 2014.

The new approved curriculum intentionally strengthened an emphasis on integrative thinking and metacognition for our students through a design that anchored general education courses into learning communities. These communities are connected to other high-impact practices, including a required first-year experience, a civic engagement component, and a core capstone course. As this ambitious design suggests, we are committed to ensuring that all our undergraduate students engage in high-impact practices multiple times throughout their time at our institution because of demonstrated correlation between HIPs and equitable student outcomes.

Award Criteria

Criterion 3: Actions Taken
An exemplary application clearly details the steps used to implement the new or revised program and ensure that implementation remained on track. It should also include a detailed description of the individuals required for implementation, and how their support was garnered.

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

- The participants involved in the implementation process
- The process used to gain faculty, staff, and administrative support for and participation in the implementation, and the consistency of the process with existing institutional processes
- The action steps identified and taken to implement the program, including professional development
- The activities used to check and maintain the progress on the new program implementation

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

With our new general education program approved in spring 2014, the task force’s focus shifted to implementation planning. Our goal was to run a pilot of general education learning communities the following spring of 2015 with the full launch of the new program to occur in the fall of 2015. There were several key features that needed to be planned for, including faculty development, transition plans for students, culture building and assessment. A group of faculty and staff, including the director of advising, the assistant dean of student life, the director of faculty development, and director of institutional effectiveness attended a weeklong intensive workshop on learning communities at the Washington Center at Evergreen State University. This experience allowed the team to come back to campus and develop implementation plans for each of the following areas:

1. Faculty development
   A select group of faculty were invited to participate in the learning community pilot program as a result of their prior teaching evaluations. We were able to provide stipends to these faculty for participation in a set of development workshops. Over the spring and summer of 2014, these faculty came together for initial discussions about shared understandings of a Queens’ learning community and to begin dialogues with each other about course topic development. Intensive workshops were then held during which the faculty were able to work on the design of their spring 2015 learning communities with guidance from the director of faculty development. Additionally, a separate group of faculty began laying the ground-work for a new first-year seminar course for incoming students. Both faculty groups were guided through the process of designing backward from the new programmatic learning outcomes. The pilot learning communities ran during the spring of 2015 and the first-year seminar ran for the first time in the fall of 2015. Student course evaluations, faculty comments, and artifacts of student work provided the groundwork for subsequent faculty development in the spring and summer of 2015.

Since 2015, the general education program has sponsored an annual two-day professional development workshop during which faculty learning community teams are introduced to the principles of integrative design and encouraged to work together on course and assignment design. Over the past five years, more than 80 full-time and adjunct faculty have participated in these workshops. While faculty teams have found these annual experiences productive, they have also clearly indicated that the process of building effective and manageable integrative assignments in their learning communities can be a major challenge. In addition to wanting more constant support before, during, and after teaching their community courses, they have also raised the compounding factor that since many faculty rotate in and out of general education communities, the creation and modification of these assignments is an on-going process. As a result of this feedback, the
general education director has collaborated closely with the faculty development director to continue to diversify consultation and workshop support around these topics.

2. Advising
As first-year advising was historically done in conjunction with the first course in the previous general education curriculum, the director of academic advising undertook development of a stand alone new first-year advising program. This new system, launched in the fall of 2015, paired incoming students with a faculty advisor in their intended major area for 3 semesters and built an on-going set of workshops for these faculty to learn the best ways to work with students in transition.

3. Transition plans
Since the new General Education curriculum was entirely rebuilt, the number of course offerings from the previous curriculum would be phased out over a three-year period. With that phase-out, course substitutions for current students had to be planned. The General Education committee worked with the registrar’s office and academic advising to lay out personalized transition plans for all students on campus. These plans were shared with the students and with the student’s academic advisors, so that everyone knew how the course substitutions would be available.

4. Culture building
In order for the implementation of the new program to be successful, it was pivotal to help key campus stakeholders understand the curriculum and its strengths and purpose. One important group was department chairs; the general education director had collective and individual meetings with many different program and department chairs to learn about their concerns with the new curriculum launch and to help them better understand opportunities and benefits that could arise from these changes. Other key stakeholders included admissions, student life, student government, and athletics. Members of the general education committee met with key influencers in all of these areas. It is important to note that we also focused intentionally on educating institutional leadership about the new program. The president was very supportive of the change—even to extent of turning over a board of trustees meetings to showcasing the new learning communities. This opened the door for presentations to the alumni council and the parent’s council. While working with each of these stakeholders was time intensive, it was important to the sustainability of the new program that our campus begin to “buy in” to its promise.

In addition to the one-on-one and group stakeholder meetings that took place, we recognized that the general education program needed a strong public face that clearly articulated the driving features of the program. We worked with a faculty member in New Media Design to create a general education infographic that visually described the components of the curriculum and emphasized its integrative philosophy.

5. Assessment
The director of faculty development worked extensively with the general education committee to level the general education learning outcomes across the 3-4 year curriculum. In conjunction with this process, there was a larger meeting with general education, international programs, internships, and student life to look at how the learning outcomes of these programs complemented each other, how they overlapped, and how they fit into the overall mission of the university. With these learning outcomes in place, the general education
committee adapted AAC&U VALUE rubrics with institution specific language and leveled them across the curriculum. These rubrics were then provided to faculty, staff, and students, and used in the design of general education courses, in assessment workshops, and in the summer faculty development workshops.

6. Continual program evaluation
In addition to the formal assessment structures, the general education committee also held campus sessions for students, staff, and faculty and used anonymous surveys with faculty and staff to listen to the concerns about how implementation of the new curriculum progressed. As a result of feedback, the general education committee worked with the office of the registrar and with academic affairs to anchor parts of the curriculum into specific time slots in the academic schedule to help avoid course conflicts between general education and various majors. The registrar’s office was a key partner in planning the course schedule, looking for conflicts, and helping departments plan for their own course rotations.

Award Criteria

Criterion 4: Evidence of Improvement and Continuing Commitment to the Processes
An exemplary application clearly describes a program that produces evidence of learning and a process that is not a “one-time” implementation, but a core program built around a continuous improvement process. An exemplary application should provide evidence from multiple years of assessment.

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:
• The evidence of student learning and the analysis of the results
• The relevance of the results the general education program needs identified by the institution
• The communications used to inform faculty, staff, administration and students of the results
• The evidence of on-going commitment to the planned improvements and checks on the improvements

Please limit your response to two pages. The following text box may be increased in size as necessary.
As discussed earlier in our application, our previous general education program did not have program level student learning outcomes and so it was very important to us as we designed and implemented the new curriculum that we build a thoughtful and meaningful assessment process for our newly established program outcomes. The first steps that the now reconstituted general education committee took was to establish a rotation for when each of the five program outcomes would be assessed and to create leveled versions of each outcome. They also developed rubrics for each outcome, utilizing the AAC&U VALUE rubrics as appropriate.

As there was not a strong campus culture or practice of authentic outcomes assessment, their next important step was to invite a wide range of general education faculty to attend assessment training sessions near the end of the first year of new program roll out. The program supported faculty participation in these sessions by offering modest stipends and copies of assessment technique books. The sessions provided a comprehensive introduction to good assessment practices including sampling strategies, rubric use, evaluator norming, interrater reliability, and group session practice with authentic sample student work artifacts. Following training, faculty assessors gathered together and engaged in the scoring of sampled student work related to our SLO on integrative thinking. At the end of the sessions, the Associate Provost, who had expertise in this area and helped design the training, led the groups in a debrief session that resulted in faculty scorers offering insights they had had as a result of doing the assessment work. Foremost among those comments were faculty recognizing the relationship between strong assignment design and valid student artifacts for a particular SLO. Following the scoring sessions, the general education director compiled the assessment results and shared them with the committee. Over the next three years, the committee followed that same process of training more and more faculty in authentic assessment, garnering insights from scorers about their own practice, and compiling and sharing scoring results.

Overall, there are two different but equally important ways in which we can analyze our assessment results: 1) we can track growth over time by following whether student learning declines, stays steady, or improves as indicated by cohort achievement (i.e., the scoring results for sophomore level students in one year compared with junior student level performance in the following year) and 2) performance at a particular level of the curriculum compared year over year (i.e., student learning results for 100 level courses in one year compared to subsequent years). When considered by either approach, our results have been meaningful. For example, we have seen an increase among junior student outcome achievement; juniors in 2018 (the cohort of students who had gone through the scaffolded curriculum) produced artifacts that, on average, scored a 3 or 4 on our rubric more than 50% of the time, with fewer than 10% scoring in the lowest quartile. These results represent an improvement over those from previous years of assessed junior level student work products. When our assessment results are considered at a curriculum level (since our program outcomes are intentionally levelled) we have learned important things about the delivery of the curriculum. For instance, when we considered 100 level courses over three years on our integrative learning outcome, we found a perplexing level of inconsistency. When we disaggregated that data by section, key trends emerged and it became clear that student work drawn from particular course sections was not well-aligned with the student learning outcome to which it was tagged for assessment.

As a result of these kinds of findings, the general education committee has kept a sustained focus on providing faculty development support on assignment design and outcome alignment. As suggested, one of our key findings was that some faculty were struggling with how to align a particular assignment with an intended outcome. We found that this challenge was occurring for some returning faculty as well as for some new to teaching in the program. In order to assist faculty with that issue, in 2018, the university created a Faculty Fellow for Integrative Learning initiative in order to recognize and formalize the important role that
peer mentorship can play in improving teaching and learning practices. The general education program partnered with the Provost’s Office to select four faculty as the inaugural set of Fellows. Support for them included travel for the fellows, general education director, and faculty development director to an AAC&U institute plus guaranteeing professional development funds for each fellow for a scholarship of teaching and learning activity or project. In return, the Fellows offered one to one consultation sessions, structured group sessions including assignment charrettes, and backward design and scaffolding workshops.

Not only has our program assessment helped us track student learning trends and faculty development needs but as the general education program shared its assessment framework and results with the university’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness, the director of that office held up the program as an exemplar that he shared with other academic departments on campus trying to improve and sustain a culture of continuous improvement.

Finally, it is worth noting that evidence suggests that our new program has indeed addressed a key need that drove program revision: lackluster first year retention rates and the emergence of key first year general education course as “barrier” courses. Since the implementation of our new general education curriculum, no general education courses are barrier courses and in fact, retention rates have improved tremendously—increasing 11% since the program’s launch. Moreover, what had been troubling trends in the persistence of new students by demographic groups (notably race/ethnicity, first generation, and low socio-economic backgrounds) have been entirely erased with new students returning and succeeding at equal rates.

EVALUATION RUBRIC FOR
Program Improvement-Revision or Enhancement of Core Program

Introduction: As indicated in the application, the AGLS Awards for Improving General Education are intended to recognize institutions committed to the principles and practices described in the AGLS Guide. The general evaluation descriptions below reflect the assumption that the Awards are intended to serve as models of how to achieve innovative reform, enhanced learning, strong leadership, and institutional commitment to on-going, evidence-based improvement. Preference will be given to programs that are fully developed and implemented with an improvement cycle; these are programs that develop and provide faculty ownership activities, check the impact, and consider improvements.

Criterion #1: Identification of the Problem
Excellent Model: Application clearly presents a history and context of the problem that relates to the institution’s mission and provides a good example of processes essential to developing a dialogue between all
key players and aimed at identifying the problem or need. Provides specific, practical, innovative methods to understand needs and communicate them to all relevant faculty, staff, administrators, and other stakeholders.

**Acceptable Model:** Application presents a historical and mission-related context for the problem, and a process involving all key players is explained. The processes offer some insight into effective improvement processes and activities but might offer limited development of both or lack either a description of effective processes for identifying the problem or clear evidence of effective communication with all relevant and essential parties.

**Developing Model:** Application presents limited history or context for the need. A need is identified, but the explanation of the processes used to identify the need lack detail or the creativity essential for a practical model for others. Communication of the need and issues and/or process for engaging key stakeholders is limited, or methods described suggest limited effectiveness.

Criterion #2: Identification of Learning Goals and Procedures Used to Address Needs

**Excellent Model:** Application shows the key institutional members were actively involved or supporting involvement in the process of selecting learning goals and related instructional practices, and the identification of implementation plans. Methods for engaging key stakeholders are clearly described. Research is detailed, extensive, and current, and significant numbers of decision makers were involved in the review, and the learning and implementation plans are reflective of the mission and values. Clear evidence of a well-considered, creative process for selecting goals and related instructional practices, for a systematic implementation, and for winning broad support for the goals and procedures is detailed and represent a model that others might use to achieve success. Evidence of broad support for new goals is provided.

**Acceptable Model:** Application makes clear that key players were involved in the process of identifying goals and procedures to address needs but may leave questions about the level of support by key players or, in general, across the institution. Some quality research is identified; might be questions about how widely it is shared or its role in the improvement process. The processes used for selecting learning goals and activities, and for implementation procedures and for winning broad support are given and can offer some insight to others, though the effectiveness of some processes might not be fully or effectively described. The relevance of plans to mission and values is given but might not detail and intentional institutional effort to make the connections.

**Developing Model:** Application does not clearly show all key players are involved in or supportive of the process of identifying goals that address needs, selecting implementation procedures, and winning support for the goals. Limited research is described, or the application describes very limited use of the research. Processes used for selecting goals, implementation procedures, and/or for winning support are described but fail to inspire or fail to offer creative solutions for people wrestling with similar problems. Questions exist about the level of support for the new goals or the relevance to mission and values.

Criterion #3: Actions Taken

**Excellent Model:** Application clearly identifies key players and their roles in the improvement activities. The key action steps taken reveal creative approaches to gaining broad consensus and successful implementation, and they are consistent with continuous quality improvement principles and practices—they will likely encourage future improvement activities. Evidence of broad ownership of and support for the improvements is given. Progress was checked by appropriate individuals who are clearly given responsibility for checking progress and keeping the process moving forward. Key leadership roles and efforts (faculty, staff, and administration) throughout this stage are helpfully described.

**Acceptable Model:** Application identifies key players and action steps taken. Leadership is exhibited and evidence of broad-based commitment is described, but evidence might leave questions about the effectiveness of action steps or about the level or breadth of commitment and leadership. Steps taken seem to work for the institution but might offer limited use to others or might fail to reflect the principles and practices of institutions
committed to continuous quality improvement. Progress was checked and evidence of progress is provided. The methods used to check progress might not make clear that progress will continue.

**Developing Model:** Application identifies individuals involved in the process and the actions taken but does not clearly identify leadership efforts and might not make clear the level of broad-based support or the sort of efforts required for successful improvement. Processes used might not suggest a commitment to continuous quality improvement and lack the creativity needed to inspire others. Evidence that progress was being checked is not given or the effectiveness of the progress-checking processes is unclear.

**Criterion #4: Evidence of Improvement and Continuing Commitment to the Process**

**Excellent Model:** Application presents strong evidence of success, including assessment results, which reveals that needs are effectively addressed. A description is given of goals met or being met. Evidence strongly suggests that student learning is improved as a result of the effort. The institution clearly describes a plan that reveals an on-going commitment to continuous improvement, and the leadership and support for the continuing improvement is described.

**Acceptable Model:** Clearly the institution is moving forward and has been improved by the efforts. A process is in place to produce evidence that goals are being met and needs addressed, but the evidence of success or student learning is limited or yet to be achieved. Commitment to on-going improvement is offered, but questions exist about the future success of the plans or about support for these efforts. Overall, there is sufficient success to provide some insight to other organizations.

**Developing Model:** Application does not provide clear explanation of how the institution was improved by the process and fails to provide sufficient evidence of how the process has produced positive learning results, although the institution might be set up for improved learning. Commitment to on-going improvements is either not provided or not developed enough to be helpful as a model for others.