

IMPROVING LEARNING IN GENERAL EDUCATION

An AGLS Guide to Assessment & Program Review



The Association for General & Liberal Studies
www.agls.org

NOTICE:

The AGLS offices have moved since the publication of this monograph.

Please update your records to reflect our office's new mailing address and other contact information.

Thank you.

Association for General & Liberal Studies

2236 Newton Street

Columbus, Indiana 47201

(812) 390-6912

execdir@agls.org

www.agls.org

“AGLS’ ‘Improving Learning in General Education’ provides a rich set of practical questions that will help educators analyze, clarify, and measure the key processes that make general and liberal learning happen. Colleges and universities intentionally striving to strengthen the education they offer their students will find this “Guide” a powerful tool for continuous improvement.”

**Stephen Spangehl, Director of AQIP
Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association**

“AGLS and AAC&U share a deep conviction that the integrity of the general education program is a key indicator of the overall quality of students’ liberal education. Kudos to AGLS for these guiding questions that can help faculty create both strong purpose and best practice in general education.”

**Carol Schneider, President
Association of American Colleges and Universities**

For comments or to purchase copies, contact:

**Paul Ranieri
AGLS Executive Director**

Department of English
Ball State University
Muncie, IN 47306-0460
E-mail: pranieri@bsu.edu
Phone: 765-285-8406

AGLS website: www.agls.org

A large, thin red bracket graphic that frames the title and subtitle text. It consists of two vertical lines on the left and right, with horizontal lines at the top and bottom, and inward-pointing hooks on the left and right sides.

IMPROVING LEARNING IN GENERAL EDUCATION

An AGLS Guide to Assessment & Program Review

Acknowledgements

The very “heart” of this document, the series of questions for institutional or programmatic self-examination that you will find on pages four and five, is the product of a lengthy and in-depth editing process that involved some of the people in this country most knowledgeable about general education. All of them are in some way involved in the Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS).

The first draft of the questions was authored by **Rob Mauldin, John Nichols, and Jerry Gaff**. **Michael Gress, Peg Downes, and Paul Ranieri**—AGLS officers—liked the idea and the draft a great deal and expanded the draft into a full-fledged AGLS project. At the 2005 AGLS Conference in Fairfax, Virginia, this draft was presented to the AGLS Executive Council and specially invited people with years of experience in directing general education programs. During that meeting and by correspondence in the subsequent months, dozens of suggestions for improving the text of the questions were received and incorporated into the present version of the document.

The AGLS Executive Council established the following **Editorial Committee** to see this project through to its final form:

Peg Downes, University of North Carolina at Asheville, AGLS President
Jerry Gaff, Senior Scholar at AACU
Michael Gress, Vincennes University, AGLS President-Elect
Rob Mauldin, Shawnee State University, AGLS Past President
John Nichols, Saint Joseph’s College (Indiana)
Paul Ranieri, Ball State University, AGLS Executive Director
Russ Watson, College of DuPage

Helpful suggestions for revision came from the following colleagues who in some cases took a great deal of time to try out the usefulness of these questions in the context of their own institutions. The Editorial Committee is greatly indebted to them.

Dale Dowden, Vincennes University
Mary Durfee, Michigan Technological University
Ed Katz, University of North Carolina at Asheville
Jim Kuhlman, University of North Carolina at Asheville
Jack Meacham, State University of New York at Buffalo
Ingrid Peternel, College of DuPage
Richard Schur, Drury University
Joan Stanley, American Association of Colleges of Nursing
Wendolyn Tetlow, College of DuPage

All the rest of this document was written by **John Nichols**, NEH Distinguished Teaching Professor at Saint Joseph’s College in Indiana, with editing supplied by the AGLS Executive Council. **Michael Gress** of Vincennes University very ably managed the complicated process of formatting and printing the “Guide.”

AGLS – Systems Analysis of General Education

Of all the changes accreditors, both regional and specialized, have recently made in their criteria, *continuous quality improvement* is without a doubt the most challenging new prescription (cf. HLC, SACS, WASC, for example). The Higher Learning Commission's (aka North Central) Academic Quality Improvement Program (AQIP), based on an application of Baldrige quality criteria to higher education, has produced a powerful process whereby institutions can define and judge their progress in continuous quality improvement.

Steve Spanghel, AQIP Director, published the following reflections about quality on the AQIP website:

Since we can measure the performance of the various processes an organization uses to gauge and meet its stakeholders' needs, improvements are measurable.

...quality becomes a journey [rather than an independently existing Platonic ideal], a search for better ways to understand the changing needs of an organization's stakeholders and for better ways to meet their needs. Since we can measure the performance of the various processes an organization uses to gauge and meet its stakeholders' needs, improvements are measurable—although quality itself is not. Quality describes an organization that behaves in certain ways—it focuses on processes, bases decisions on facts and measurements, looks at itself as an integrated system designed to achieve its ultimate mission and purposes, and so on...

(“Explore Continuous Improvement,” www.aqip.org)

The Association for General and Liberal Studies, the national higher education organization most committed to the quality of general education, became very impressed with the potential that exists in the AQIP process for improving the quality of general education. But the nine categories of questions published by AQIP do not, in themselves, focus in any specific way on an institution's general education program. Therefore, a group of AGLS members and officers decided to develop its own approach to continuous quality improvement in general education by integrating ideas from three sources:

- 1) the AQIP process;
- 2) recent national publications on “best practice” in general education; and
- 3) the experience of the general education program faculty, directors, and coordinators who constitute AGLS and the Council for Administration of General and Liberal Studies national memberships.

Consideration of the following questions by a group of committed faculty will set a college or university on a journey of continuous quality improvement in its general education program. Each institution will, of course, choose to focus its attention on those particular questions they find most pertinent to the institution's current situation and concerns.

AGLS: Systems Analysis of General Education

Institutional Choices

- C1** – To what common student learning objectives are we committed for all students, whether they are enrolled on campus or in distance education or dual credit courses? In addition to a major or a study in depth, what knowledge, values, and skills of inquiry—what some accreditors term “what the public expects of a college-educated person”—do we desire to see in our graduates?
- C2** – By what means do we ensure that these student learning objectives for general education align with our mission, vision, and philosophy?
- C3** – What practices do we use to ensure that our general education program meets the 21st-century expectations of our stakeholders in such areas as diversity, technology, and core inquiry skills for independent lifelong learning in a globalized environment?
- C4** – How do we provide leadership and resources (human and financial) for the general education program? By what means do we guarantee the centrality of general education in all our academic programs?

Action Steps

- A1** – How do our planning and operational processes for general education produce a curriculum that is purposeful, coherent, engaging, rigorous, and cumulative over the two or four years of our degree programs?
- A2** – What do we do to achieve our expectations for general education, and who is responsible for this action? How do we communicate our expectations to students and other stakeholders?
- A3** – How are course syllabi reviewed to assure that the common learning objectives are included in general education courses? How do we make departmental faculty knowledgeable about the purposes and goals of our general education program so they can reinforce and build on previous learning in their advanced courses?
- A4** – How do we establish faculty credentials for teaching general education? Do senior faculty participate in and take ownership of general education? Can junior faculty gain tenure by teaching in general education? What is our active program for orientation of new faculty, part-time faculty, and graduate assistants? How well do we provide professional development for all faculty involved in general education?
- A5** – How do we work to ensure that the faculty as a whole recognize and exercise collegial responsibility for the general education curriculum and its learning objectives?

- A6** – What methods do we use to connect and integrate learning in the major with general education, in an effort to educate students in multiple modes of inquiry?
- A7** – How do we involve the co-curricular experiences of students to help achieve the learning objectives for general education?
- A8** – How do our faculty use the general education learning objectives as standards for grading and otherwise evaluating student work?
- A9** – What practices have we developed to identify and to assist students who have difficulty in meeting our general education learning objectives?
- A10** – How do we monitor the preparation and learning outcomes of transfer students, both incoming and outgoing? How do we facilitate the transfer of general education credits? How do we monitor learning outcomes in dual-credit (high school—college) situations?

Informed Judgments

- J1** – What measures of student success in meeting general education learning objectives do we regularly collect and study?
- J2** – What is our evidence, beyond achieving a passing grade in required courses, that our graduates have acquired the knowledge and skills in general education expected by the institution and its stakeholders for the awarding of degrees?
- J3** – How do our general education outcomes compare with those of peer institutions?

Further Improvements

- I1** – To what extent do our faculty examine the results of assessment, discuss their implications, and use them to make improvements in the program?
- I2** – How do we select goals for improvement in student learning? What specific improvement priorities are we now targeting, and what strategies are we employing to address them?
- I3** – How do we communicate current assessment results and improvement priorities to students, faculty members, and other stakeholders?

FAQs, Comments, Responses to Objections

WHY would anyone do all the extra work this process involves?

The major and general education are the two pillars of every student's degree. The more these can be constructed to *collaborate* on student growth and development, the more students will gain from their education. Moreover, general education is the program by which institutions “place their mark on all their graduates” (George Peterson, Executive Director of The Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology). It is therefore at least as important as the major, if the institution has any distinctive reason for being, and deserves prime attention in any efforts to improve the quality of what the institution accomplishes.

WHAT would be the use? Don't these questions describe a “utopia”?

As said above, the questions pull together, into a single process, what numerous publications (by AACU, NEH, AAHE, Carnegie, Jossey-Bass, etc.) have identified as “best practice” in general education, as envisioned by leaders in higher education from all across the country (see *References*). In Steve Spanghel's terms, the questions do indeed describe, or perhaps suggest in their implicit prescriptions, the ultimate goal in a journey toward higher and higher quality—suggestions as to which way to go to strive to become the best. It's the *journeying* that's important here, as embodied in the dynamic adjective in the expression “continuous quality improvement.”

HOW might we use these questions, IF we decide to give them a try?

The AGLS members who constructed this document hail from different sorts of institutions—four-year, two-year, public, and private—so some of the questions may **not** apply to a particular institution. Skip them, but *thoughtfully*. Note that the questions are all couched in first-person plural terms. The presumption is that a group of “concerned citizens” at an institution will work collegially to answer the questions, out of their concern (and maybe even passion, since mission can sometimes inspire that) to set their college or university on such a journey of continuous quality improvement in its all-important general education program.

I want to revisit my first question again—WHY do this?

Don't we have enough to do to keep our major programs state-of-the-art? YES, and that's one of the most urgent reasons for paying all this attention to general education! The new name for “quality” is *outcomes*, and as specialized accreditors made the shift from inputs to outcomes in writing their accreditation standards, they rediscovered that some of the traditional outcomes of general education were simply essential to 21st-century professionals.

Moreover, general education is the program by means of which institutions “place their mark on all their graduates” (George Peterson, Executive Director of ABET).

ABET went so far as to label its eleven new criteria for accreditation “the 21st century's trivium and quadrivium.” ABET had received a letter from the Boeing Corporation listing nine attributes of the type of engineer it would prefer to hire: seven of the nine attributes were general education, not engineering-specific, outcomes. The six

new international standards for AACSB accreditation include only one standard dealing with knowledge of business affairs; the other five are again general education outcomes. Finally, in the field of nursing, one sentence from AACN is an excellent example of the new collaboration accreditors want to see between the major and general education: “Nurses recognize that clinical judgments have as much to do with values and ethics as they do with science and technology” (*Essentials*, page 5).

Elucidations

There are three clear examples of how regional accreditors, who affect everybody in academe, have introduced the challenge of continuous quality improvement into their accreditation processes. WASC expects every institution it accredits to be a “learning institution,” and SACS requires a “Quality Enhancement Plan” to be part of every self-study, but North Central has probably made the change at the highest possible level. Its old Criterion #3 simply asked the site visit team to determine if the institution had the resources to enable it to *continue* to work at its mission; the new Criterion #2, however, shifts the emphasis to continuous improvement, rather than mere survival: “The organization’s ongoing evaluation and assessment processes provide reliable evidence of institutional effectiveness that clearly informs strategies *for continuous improvement*” (HLC Handbook, page 3.2-7; emphasis added).

AGLS is simply drawing attention to how CQI can be applied to a very important aspect of an institution’s mission, its general education program.

So this application of the concept of continuous quality improvement to general education is right on the cutting edge of American higher education. AGLS is simply drawing attention to how CQI can be applied to a very important aspect of an institution’s mission, its general education program. The number of questions has been judiciously considered, so as not to offer too many, and thus discourage use of the model, nor too few, and so miss important dimensions of improvement. Institutions are invited to omit questions that do not apply to their type of institution and urged to alter questions to make them more relevant to particular contexts.

What follow are explanations and clarifications of why particular questions are suggested, where they came from, and where more information about them can be found.

Institutional Choices

The best way to consider learning outcomes is in terms of the geological concept of stratigraphy. Not all outcomes are created equal. They come from different stakeholders, and the institution enjoys different degrees of freedom relative to each source. The public—state and federal governments, plus our own peers on the boards of regional accreditors—have clear expectations of what a college-educated person ought to know and very little leeway with regard to these outcomes. A bit more voluntary, but still prescriptive once the decision is made to offer a program, would be what particular disciplinary or professional fields require through their specialized accreditors or national associations. Where an institution has the most freedom is in the

Not all outcomes are created equal.

outcomes that derive from its specific mission and reason for being: single purpose institutions, religiously affiliated institutions, single sex institutions, historically black institutions, and the like. In addition to formulating outcomes so that some kind of relevant data may be gathered about them, it is likewise important to be aware of the stakeholders' interests (the "who," "why," and "how") behind each learning expectation.

Three rich sources of information about general education outcomes have been published by AACU in very recent years: *Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree* (2004), *The Art and Science of Assessing General Education Outcomes* (2005), and *Liberal Education Outcomes* (2005). Besides these helpful booklets, the websites of regional accreditors are full of information about what the "college-educated person" should be. WASC Senior has a particularly comprehensive list of outcomes. It is also interesting to analyze the respective weights given to general education and the major in the WASC statement:

Baccalaureate programs engage students in an integrated course of study of sufficient breadth and depth to prepare them for work, citizenship, and a fulfilling life. These programs also ensure the development of core learning abilities and competencies including, but not limited to, college-level written and oral communication; college-level quantitative skills; information literacy; and the habit of critical analysis of data and argument. In addition, baccalaureate programs actively foster an understanding of diversity; civic responsibility; the ability to work with others; and the capability to engage in lifelong learning. Baccalaureate programs also ensure breadth for all students in the areas of cultural and aesthetic, social and political, as well as scientific and technical knowledge expected of educated persons in this society. Finally, students are required to engage in an in-depth, focused, and sustained program of study as part of their baccalaureate programs.

(WASC Handbook, page 20)

Question #C4 includes a reference to the "centrality of general education." This idea is best elucidated by a paragraph from the Higher Learning Commission's Handbook (page 3.4-3; emphasis added):

Regardless of how a higher learning organization frames the general education necessary to fulfill its mission and goals, it clearly and publicly articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of the general education it provides for its students. It also shows its commitment to the *centrality* of general education by including an appropriate component of general education in all undergraduate programs of substantial length, whether they lead to certificates, diplomas, or degrees. Moreover, the organization's faculty exercises oversight for general education and, working with the administration, regularly assesses its effectiveness against the organization's stated goals for student learning.

Action Steps

This is the longest section of the model, so it may be helpful to indicate how its ten suggested questions fall into three subgroups. Even though everything here is about student learning, questions 9 and 10 relate to specific categories of students. Questions 1 through 3 put the institution's selected learning

outcomes into operation. The remaining questions, 4 through 8, deal with the faculty's responsibility for and collaboration on the outcomes.

The mention of "collaboration" hints at one of the main assumptions of this model. In the AACU national "Project on Accreditation and Assessment" (*Taking Responsibility*), all the rather diverse members of the project agreed that the concept of liberal education appropriate to the challenges and complexities of the 21st century is one that consists of an intense integration between general education and the major, which in turn requires a high degree of collaboration among the faculty. The previous excerpts from the WASC and the HLC handbooks exhibit this assumption, and the specialized accreditors in the project were even more insistent on how essential general education outcomes are to their professionals—both traditional outcomes, such as communication, critical thinking, and ethical skills, as well as some new ones, such as cultural sensitivity, knowledge of environments, and ability to think globally.

The following comments may help apply the ten "A" questions to particular institutions.

- (1) The five adjectives applied to the noun "curriculum" in the question come from the AACU "Project on Accreditation and Assessment" (*Taking Responsibility*) and from Standard 12 on General Education in the Handbook from the Middle States regional accrediting agency.
- (2,3) Some kind of process needs to be developed to achieve faculty cooperation across departmental lines on the learning outcomes involved in question 2, both in individual general education courses (especially if the program is a distributional one) and in major courses (to achieve cumulative learning by way of reinforcement and extension in advanced courses).
- (4) Good information about faculty development at the service of general education can be found in the AACU 1994 publication *Strong Foundations*, especially in the sections starting on page 12 and page 44.
- (5) The source for this question, utopian as it may sound, is the first edition of AACU's *Integrity in the College Curriculum*, page 9: "...fashion a range of incentives to revive the responsibility of the faculty *as a whole* for the curriculum *as a whole*" (emphasis in original). This was a serious recommendation back in 1985, and it is even more serious today. The key will be creative thinking to discover the workable "wholes."
- (6) It is the Middle States Association again that has coined the neat turn of a phrase to epitomize the results of the integration of general education with the major in the curriculum; what such integration achieves for the graduates is that they are prepared "to make enlightened judgments outside as well as within their academic specialty." This is likewise exactly what professional accreditors are looking for in 21st-century programs.
- (7) The involvement of co-curriculars in furthering the aims of general education is developed in *Strong Foundations* (starting on pages 22 and 48) and in the literature on the freshman year.

- (8) This question is based on what Peter Ewell calls the “time bomb” that can be found on page 21 of the WASC Senior Handbook: “The institution demonstrates that its graduates consistently achieve its stated levels of attainment and ensures that its expectations for student learning are embedded in the standards faculty use to evaluate student work.”
- (9) This special attention to student learning difficulties logically derives from the primary purpose of assessment (see next section).
- (10) The relevance of this question is based on the very important role that two-year institutions play in AGLS and the fact that the majority of college students attend more than one institution.

Informed Judgments

The best approach to assessment is not due to some external authority’s imposition on faculty time and effort but rather to the professor’s internal commitment to the craftsmanship of the professional, a commitment to always do better. Thus, it helps immensely to distinguish three purposes for assessment and even more to keep them in a specific rank ordering. The first purpose of assessment is to give feedback to students on their progress (or lack of it) in mastering the objectives of a course. On something close to a weekly basis, professors do this by various classroom and project methods. In second place, the faculty who have responsibility for a program meet every year or two to study assessment results and determine how to enhance program outcomes. Only in third place comes the purpose of assessment that has unfortunately grabbed all of the attention: episodic reports to stakeholders. Faculty do not really have to bother a lot about this, because if the first and second purposes have been well accomplished, administrators can use those faculty-generated data to produce such reports.

For planning the curriculum, then, you work backwards from this vision...

The assumption from the “Project on Accreditation and Assessment” that underlies the questions in this section is the wise advice to “begin with the end.” As in the WASC statement about the undergraduate degree, start your thinking about outcomes with the vision of the graduates from your program—perhaps imagining them as they walk across the stage at Commencement. For planning the curriculum, then, you work backwards from this vision, asking how you bring them from where they are as first-year students to what you desire and expect in graduates. But for assessment of outcomes, this implies that some comprehensive and integrating senior level assessment is the apex of all your assessments of student learning outcomes. Here is a pertinent item from that AACU project: “There are integrative courses and assignments in the curriculum in which (a) students not only master knowledge and skills but practice integration; (b) faculty coach students to make connections between the major and general education; and (c) students are engaged in some culminating activity or product that demonstrates their ability to integrate their undergraduate experience.”

- (1) Don’t do too much assessing! Once you look at all the recommendations that have been generated

by the national hoopla over assessment—direct and indirect, quantitative and qualitative, formative and summative, etc.—the natural temptation is to design an assessment process that overwhelms faculty. Instead, measure what will truly be significant information about learning outcomes, a few at a time, in strategically important courses. WASC and MSA both have excellent publications to help make these judgments: *Evidence Guide* (from WASC) and *Student Learning Assessment* (from MSA).

- (2) Course grades can be turned into meaningful assessment data, *on the condition* that the WASC provision cited in question #8 on the previous page is fulfilled.
- (3) Who are our peers? The response to this question will vary from institution to institution, and from stratum to stratum of stakeholders for each institution. However the judgments are made here, the same key advice holds: don't do too much. Select significant measures that will not distract faculty from their primary responsibility to give timely feedback to students, that will furnish ample data, and that will furnish the kind of data that can be acted upon to improve performance.

Further Improvements

- (1) *Using* assessment results, “closing the loop” the jargon calls it, is of course the whole idea behind CQI. One powerful way of accomplishing this is to require that assessment results are part of the annual budgeting process.
- (2) Assessment results will hardly ever bring about a change in institutional mission—the causal arrow runs the other way—but they can lead to revisions in pedagogy, in curriculum, and even in the way outcomes are formulated. Some institutional process is needed to ensure that this follow-up occurs and that it makes the best possible use of faculty experience.
- (3) “Who needs to know what” is for each institution to decide—at least until the federal government gives more explicit directives to accreditors. The best way to keep that from happening is to take charge of this process ourselves.

Some institutional process is needed to ensure that this follow-up occurs and that it makes the best possible use of faculty experience.

Comments

In the spirit of continuous quality improvement, the AGLS Executive Council solicits and welcomes any and all suggestions for improving this Guide. Please e-mail your suggestions to Paul Ranieri, the AGLS Executive Director: pranieri@bsu.edu. Thank you.

References

The criterion for inclusion in this list is usefulness to people working with the questions in this systems analysis of general education. So the claim is that all of these sources contributed to the formulation of the questions in this model, and each has much more information to contribute. In addition, this list explains the acronyms and other cryptic allusions in the previous pages.

Regional Accreditors

HLC, The Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association
[www.ncahigherlearningcommission.org]

MSA, The Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools [www.msache.org]
Student learning assessment: Options and resources, n.d.

WASC Senior, Western Association of Schools and Colleges [www.wascweb.org]
Evidence guide, 2002.

Specialized & Professional Associations

AACN, American Association of Colleges of Nursing [www.aacn.nche.edu]
The essentials of baccalaureate education for professional nursing practice, 1998.

AACSB, The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business [www.aacsb.edu]

ABET, Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology [www.abet.org]

ACCP, American College of Clinical Pharmacy [www.accp.com]
Zlatic, Thomas D. *Revisioning professional education: An orientation to teaching*, 2005.

AACU, Association of American Colleges and Universities [www.aacu.org]

1984. *Integrity in the college curriculum*.

1994. *Strong foundations: Twelve principles for effective general education programs*.

1998. *Contemporary understandings of liberal education* (Schneider & Shoenberg).

2003. *The challenge of connecting learning* (2nd ed.).

2004. *Taking responsibility for the quality of the baccalaureate degree*.

2005. *The art and science of assessing general education outcomes*.

2005. *Liberal education outcomes*.

AGLS Mission

AGLS serves colleges and universities by helping students and faculty enjoy the benefits of a liberal education attained through quality general education.

AGLS is a community of learners—faculty, students, administrators, alumni— intent upon improving general and liberal education at two-year and four-year institutions. AGLS identifies and supports the benefits of students’ liberal education attained through general education programs. As an advocate, AGLS tracks changes in general education and liberal studies, sponsoring professional activities that promote successful teaching, curricular innovation, and effective learning.

AGLS Goals

- Promote the Quality and Centrality of General and Liberal Education in the United States and Abroad
- Clarify the Relationship between Assessment and Learning in General and Liberal Education
- Foster a Stronger Relationship between Two-Year and Four-Year Colleges in General and Liberal Education

Approved by the Executive Council, Association for General and Liberal Studies, 25 February 2006

“Congratulations to AGLS for taking on the important work of improving student learning in general education. Fortunately, higher education in America is beginning to accept responsibility for and continuously work to improve learning outcomes. The shift from a culture of status to a culture of evidence is a healthy one for both institutions and students. The framework provided in the ‘AGLS Guide to Assessment & Program Review’ will prove helpful to institutions and, given both the importance of general education and the mobility of today’s student population, should be used in cross-institutional discussions.”

**George R. Boggs, President and CEO
American Association of Community Colleges**

“This small document will give excellent guidance to faculty members and academic administrators when they review their general education program, seek to make it more coherent and engaging for students, and document the kinds of learning outcomes required for accreditation. Thanks to the Association for General and Liberal Studies for publishing this handy guide.”

**Jerry Gaff, Senior Scholar
Association of American Colleges & Universities**

“As a result of recent and emerging changes in the health care world, today’s professional nurses are involved in care giving, not only in acute care settings in hospitals, but in the community and in broader settings, where a liberal studies background is as important as professional skill. As a result of the expansion of care and responsibilities, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), the nationally recognized agency that accredits baccalaureate and graduate degree programs in nursing, has incorporated liberal studies into the professional core content. CCNE expects that all of its accredited nursing programs will have a vision of the liberal-educated nurse. CCNE also expects that its evaluation teams will examine how successful the nursing program is in integrating the liberal studies component into the curriculum at appropriate levels. The AGLS document provides a straightforward framework for nursing programs to assess the liberal studies component for continuous quality improvement purposes, and to assess the quality of the degree program in its entirety.”

**Marge Jackman, Associate Director
Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education**

