Teaching and Assessing Effective Communication

Fulfilling Standards 12 and 14 in a Liberal Arts College
Standards 12 and 14

12. General Education
The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.

14. Assessment of Student Learning
Assessment of student learning demonstrates that, at graduation, or other appropriate points, the institution’s students have knowledge, skills, and competencies consistent with institutional and appropriate higher education goals.
Goals for Student Learning and Development

I. Knowledge

• Acquire knowledge of human cultures and the physical world through study in the arts, humanities, languages, mathematics, natural sciences, and social sciences

• Understand social and cultural diversity in national and global contexts

• Demonstrate advanced learning and synthesis in both general and specialized studies
Goals for Student Learning and Development

II. Intellectual Skills and Practice

• Think critically, creatively, and independently
• Gather, analyze, integrate, and apply varied forms of information; understand and use evidence
• Communicate effectively
• Interact effectively and collaboratively with individuals and across social identities
• Engage in and take responsibility for learning; strive for excellence
Goals for Student Learning and Development

III. Personal and Social Values
• Examine one’s own values and their use as ethical criteria in thought and action
• Interrogate one’s own values in relation to those of others, across social and cultural differences
• Develop practical competencies for managing a personal, professional, and community life
• Apply learning to find solutions for social, civic, and scientific problems
Goals for Student Learning and Development

IV. Transformation

• Integrate and apply knowledge and creative thought from multiple disciplines in new contexts
• Embrace intellectual integrity, humility, and courage
• Foster habits of mind and body that enable a person to live deliberately and well
• Develop an enduring passion for learning
Communicate Effectively: Written Communication

• 2005 – 2007: Writing assessments
• 2007: Department-based writing requirement
  – One-course expository writing
  – Discipline-specific writing conventions
• 2008: Teagle Foundation
  – Writing in the majors: Increasing student engagement through writing
  – Three years
Writing In the Majors

• Phase I
  – Engaged in conversations
  – Submitted comprehensive writing plan

• Phase II
  – Developed or modified courses

• Phase III
  – Assessed writing
  – Modified courses
  – Submitted report
Writing In the Majors

• Assessment in departments
• Each department different
  – Generally 300-level work
  – Rubrics
  – Faculty discussions
• Iterative process
Writing in the Majors

• Initiative resulted in
  – Better understanding
    • Expectations
    • Learning outcomes
    • Rubrics
  – New courses, modified courses
  – Changes in pedagogy
  – Rubrics
What We Learned

• Commonalities
  – Developing thesis and supporting argument
  – Distinguishing between evidence and opinion
  – Use of library resources

• Small groups
  – Interdisciplinary
  – Exchange of ideas
Engagement of Faculty in Assessment

• Funding
  – Retreats
  – Stipends
  – Course development funds

• Annual assessment report

• Make it interesting
  – What would be useful for you to know?
  – What is a question you would like answered?

• Will it be sustained?
Visual Communication

- History
- Motivation
- Future
Navigating in the Liberal Arts Context: An Exercise

1. Do you have general goals for your students’ learning and development? If not:
   
a) Which faculty committee has it on its agenda?
   b) Who will collaborate with faculty from Student Affairs and other areas to articulate goals?
   c) What governance process must you prepare for to achieve endorsement?
2. Have you conducted any direct assessments of your students’ general education learning?

   a) If not, who will? Assessing which goals?

   b) If so, with what results?

   c) Who is using the results?
Engaging the faculty: Gaining momentum

• What goals for students’ learning seemed to engage the most genuine faculty interest?
• Where are there conflicts?
• Where is there vision?
• Where are the champions?
• Where are the funding opportunities?