

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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To: Tammy Aagard, Jim Ahern, Penne Ainsworth, Ingrid Burke, Thomas Edgar, Alyson Hagy, Jayne Jenkins, Peter Moran, John Spitler, Lynn Stalnaker, Karen Williams
From: Myron Allen
Subject: University Studies Review Task Force — Stage 1
Date: 27 January 2011
Copies: Andy Hansen, Maggi Murdock, Erika Prager, Cameron Nazminia, Tom Burman, Sara Axelson, Dave Cozzens, Tom Buchanan

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the stage-1 task force to review the University Studies Program. I would like for the task force to examine three questions, which will help define a set of parameters for future discussions about the University Studies Program. The questions are as follows:

1. **Learning outcomes.** What learning outcomes should UW's baccalaureate program promote? Of interest are the outcomes that we should expect of all baccalaureate graduates, independent of their major fields of study. The outcomes may be accomplished through:
 - general education course requirements
 - courses taken for the major(s)
 - electives
 - the co-curriculum.

My intention is for the task force to identify a proposed set of outcomes before turning the process over to another group to discuss general education course requirements.

As a starting point, I urge the task force to review the "essential learning outcomes" proposed by the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP). That set, identified in a 2007 report¹ and summarized in the table below, currently represents the most nationally prominent outcome set associated with the American baccalaureate.

2. **Assessment.** How amenable are the outcomes to assessment? I welcome your qualitative or quantitative estimates of the degree to which each learning outcome identified in item 1 is amenable to assessment during students' baccalaureate careers at UW. While assessment must remain an integral part of UW's teaching mission, I do not favor omitting learning outcomes that are important to our society simply because they are difficult to assess during students' undergraduate careers. Instead, I believe that the institution must establish a realistic assessment program that adapts to the different levels and modes of assessability associated with different outcomes.
3. **Scope.** How many credits should a well prepared and well organized baccalaureate candidate have to take to complete UW's general education requirements? The answer should take into account the minimum number of (non-remedial) credits that students would have to complete to satisfy whatever prerequisites are required for the general education courses, in addition to the

¹"College Learning for the New Global Century: A Report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and American Promise", Association of American Colleges and Universities, Washington, DC, 2007, also retrievable online, along with other information, at <http://www.aacu.org/leap/>.

courses themselves. It should also take into account the *bona fide* demands of credit-intensive professional degree programs. To help frame this issue more completely, I would also welcome your guidance on (a) the maximum desired scope, as measured in credits, of a typical undergraduate major and (b) a target allowance for coursework (“electives”) not taken to complete the general education or major requirements.

Please discuss these matters as broadly as you can with UW’s faculty members, academic professionals and students, within the time frame allowed. I urge you to include at least the following groups in your discussions:

- Associated Students of the University of Wyoming
- The Office of Academic Support in the Division of Athletics
- Non-Traditional Student Council
- Outreach Credit Programs

For perspectives on the contributions that the co-curriculum can make to baccalaureate education, I also recommend meeting with the Dean of Students and his staff.

I’ve asked Dr. Indy Burke to chair the committee. In addition, I’ve asked Dr. Erika Prager, assessment coordinator in the Office of Academic Affairs, to be available to the task force during its deliberations, to provide perspective on those aspects of the core curriculum that involve the assessment of student learning. If you need other types of support, please let me know.

I would appreciate receiving a report on your findings no later than the start of fall semester 2011. Of course, you may elect to finish your work earlier.

LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, languages, and the arts• Intellectual and practical skills, including<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Inquiry and analysis○ Critical and creative thinking○ Written and oral communication○ Information literacy○ Teamwork and problem solving• Personal and social responsibility, including<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Civic knowledge and engagement —local and global○ Intercultural knowledge and competence○ Ethical reasoning and action○ Foundations and skills for lifelong learning• Integrative learning, including<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies |
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