

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING

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To: Steve Barrett (chair), Jim Ahern, Penne Ainsworth, Mark Byra, Jo Chytka, April Heaney, Joel Defebaugh, Ed Janak, Duncan Harris, Erika Prager, Rebecca Roberts, John Spitler
From: Carol Frost
Subject: University Studies Review Task Force – Stage 3: Implementation
Date: February 26, 2013
Copies: Myron Allen, Nicole Ballenger, Andy Hansen, Maggi Murdock, Tom Buchanan, Sara Axelson, Bill Gern

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the stage-3 task force, which will resolve practical issues that are needed to implement the new University Studies Program by Fall 2014. I would like the task force to undertake the following tasks during the remainder of this calendar year. You may wish to organize committees to assist with some of these tasks, as I suggest below.

1. Review documents developed previously.

- “Update on Revisions to UW’s General Education Program,” Myron Allen, February 2013¹
- Faculty Senate Resolution 316 in support of the revised general education program²
- “Recommendations for a Revised General Education Program,” University Studies Review Task Force – Stage 2 Final Report, Fall 2012, Professor Alyson Hagy, chair³
- “Report on first-year Seminar Best Practices for Faculty Senate and Academic Affairs,” Susan Frye, November, 2012⁴
- “The University of Wyoming Task Force on Learning Outcomes for the Baccalaureate: Recommendations,” University Studies Review Task Force – Stage 1 Final Report, May 2011, Professor Indy Burke, chair⁵
- “Revisiting University Studies 2003: Guidelines and Reflections on the Task of Updating the Core Curriculum,” Myron Allen, November 2010⁶

These documents contain many thoughtful ideas on learning outcomes and assessment, and possible roles of the University Studies Committee and University Assessment Coordinators Committee, that you should find helpful as you work to implement the new general education program.

2. Develop a list of all the activities required to implement the new program, a timeline, and assignments for committees.

Implementation of the new University Studies Program is a complex task that will require coordination of many activities in a relatively short period of time. I suggest that the first objective for the Stage 3 task

¹ Cover letter and “Update on Revisions to UW’s General Education Program,” Myron Allen, retrievable at: http://www.uwyo.edu/unst/files/docs/stage3_gened_memo.pdf

² Faculty Senate Resolution 316, retrievable at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/facultysenate/legislation/>

³ “Recommendations for a Revised General Education Program,” University Studies Review Task Force – Stage 2 Final Report, Fall 2012, Professor Alyson Hagy, chair, retrievable at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/unst/usp-review-revision/>

⁴ Report on First-Year Seminar Best Practices,” Susan Frye, retrievable at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/unst/usp-review-revision/seminar.html>

⁵ “The University of Wyoming Task Force on Learning Outcomes for the Baccalaureate: Recommendations,” University Studies Review Task Force – Stage 1 Final Report, May 2011, Professor Indy Burke, chair, retrievable at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/unst/usp-review-revision/>

⁶ “Revisiting University Studies 2003,” Myron Allen, retrievable at: <http://www.uwyo.edu/unst/usp-review-revision/index.html>

force is to list all the activities required to complete the project, determine the time that each activity will take to complete, and identify the dependencies between the activities. Taking time to develop a detailed schedule will help ensure that implementation takes place as projected in Fall 2014.

The task force will be able to call on many UW faculty members who have volunteered to help with the implementation project. It may be useful to organize committees to help accomplish the tasks. Possible committees that may address the major tasks described below could include:

- Learning outcomes, rubrics, and assessment
- Human culture (HC), science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM), and UW and Wyoming constitutions (V) courses
- Integrating the first-year experience
- The first-year seminar
- The communications sequence (C1, C2 and C3)
- The course approval process

3. Identify and further define student learning outcomes associated with each course in the new University Studies Program.

The revised general education program is composed of ten 3-credit hour courses:

- A first-year foundation involving communication skills (C1), quantitative reasoning (Q), and a first-year seminar (FYS);
- Two additional courses in communications skills (C2, C3) that may also satisfy the requirements for the major;
- Six credits of human culture (H) and six credits of science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM), all taken outside the major department; and
- A three-credit course on the US and Wyoming constitutions (V).

In addition, some of the general education student learning outcomes will be introduced or reinforced in department and college curricula.

The student learning outcomes for the new University Studies Program are only broadly described in the Stage 1 and Stage 2 reports. Before faculty can develop courses for the revised program, they will need more specific outcomes, and the rubrics necessary to assess those outcomes. I suggest that the group assigned to this task (such as a committee on learning outcomes and assessment) works closely with the University Assessment Coordinators to fully define learning outcomes and provide a list of specific types of knowledge or skills for each outcome.

Academic Affairs will establish a program of Assessment Fellows as envisioned by the Stage 2 Task Force to assist with this task and with the assessment of the program.

4. Design and implement a process for identifying courses that meet requirements for elements of the revised program.

The revised program differs from the existing general education program in that it is composed of a smaller number of courses, including a foundation of first-year courses that focus on critical and creative thinking, inquiry and analysis, quantitative reasoning, and communication. It also allows students greater flexibility in choosing STEM and Human Culture courses outside their major according to their interests.

A number of courses in the existing University Studies Program and other current UW course offerings may need little to no modification to satisfy the learning outcomes for some of the new requirements, such as communication skills, quantitative reasoning, HC, STEM, and US and Wyoming constitutions (V). For example, the courses that satisfy the U.S. and Wyoming constitutions requirements for the existing

program may meet those for the V requirement in the new program and current QA courses may satisfy the requirements for the new Q course. Others will require modification, such as English 1010, which may meet some but not all of the learning outcomes for the C1 course.

I ask the Stage 3 task force to determine the process by which UW will determine which courses satisfy the learning outcomes designed for each course in the new general education program. At the risk of being overly prescriptive, I suggest that the tasks could include the following:

- Identifying those courses which are currently offered that could satisfy the requirements for new HC, STEM, and V general education courses;
- Identifying those courses which are currently offered that could be modified to satisfy the requirements for HC, STEM, and V general education courses; and
- Making recommendations to the course approval committee on how to evaluate new courses that may meet general education requirements.

These tasks might be accomplished by a committee on HC, STEM, and V courses.

- Determining how to modify English 1010 and possibly other courses to meet the learning outcomes for the C1 course; and
- Considering how to ensure that all students meet the first-year learning outcomes, regardless of the specific first-year seminar, communications, and quantitative reasoning courses they take.

This task might be assigned to a committee on the first-year foundational courses.

- Considering how student communication skills will transfer and be further developed from one level in the communications sequence to the next; and
- Identifying those courses that are currently offered that could satisfy, or be modified to satisfy, the requirements for new C2 and C3 general education courses.

This task might be assigned to a committee on the C1, C2, and C3 sequence, who might also coordinate with the first-year foundation committee regarding the C1 course.

- Considering how to provide guidance to departments to help make faculty aware of the goals of each of the general education courses and how to provide assistance with new course development. Strategies could include sharing model syllabi and professional development workshops in ‘best practices’; and
- Finally, the task force should design an efficient review process. It may be desirable to call on members of the existing University Studies Committee for help with this task. It will be important to avoid instituting a burdensome, bureaucratic process, and to keep the emphasis on providing advice on meeting learning outcomes, rather than critiquing course content.

A committee designing the course approval process might address these tasks.

5. First-year seminars.

The first-year seminars are a key component of the new general education program’s first-year experience. The course content of the seminar is chosen by the instructor, but all seminars incorporate learning outcomes of critical and creative thinking, inquiry and analysis, communication, and possibly information literacy. The Stage 1 and 2 task forces envisioned the first-year seminars as opportunities for UW’s finest instructors to share their intellectual passion. They represent a valuable opportunity for thoughtful, creative teaching and student engagement.

I invite the task force to consider carefully the framework necessary to ensure that all seminars meet the small set of learning outcomes while fostering opportunities for innovation and iterative improvement on the part of faculty members and academic programs. The stage 2 task force suggested this process might include a role for a first-year seminar coordinator. I’m sure you appreciate the challenge of providing leadership, establishing guidelines, and ensuring outcomes while at the same time encouraging faculty members to participate and maintain a vibrant and effective set of first-year seminars. How will UW meet these requirements?

To incentivize faculty participation in first-year seminars, the Office of Academic Affairs will make available approximately \$45,000 for each of the next two years to be used for small awards to support faculty members who will exercise their creativity in developing and teaching first-year seminars, participating in assessment, and producing and sharing various models of best practices for teaching first-year seminars. I would appreciate suggestions on how to design the process by which these funds might be distributed and the activities that they may be used to support.

6. Assessment.

As envisioned by the Stage 1 and Stage 2 task forces, responsibility for assessing learning outcomes is a shared responsibility. Assessment will be carried out centrally, particularly for core courses. In addition, departments and colleges assume responsibility for assessment of learning outcomes met within degree programs.

UW's goal is that assessment should be worthwhile and meaningful. It must be performed well, so that the assessment results can be reported to our accrediting body. The results must be shared with faculty in a way that they will be used to contribute to iterative improvements in course delivery and student outcomes.

The Stage 3 task force may choose to assign the learning outcomes and assessment committee with:

- Defining the roles of the Assessment Fellows and Assessment Coordinators Committee in assessing the University Studies Program;
- Identifying those learning outcomes to be assessed in an institutionally-coordinated fashion, using national instruments such as CAT, CLA, NSSE, FSSE, and which are best addressed by direct examination of student work;
- Designing a protocol for administering national instruments and reviewing student work; and
- Determining how assessment results will contribute to improved teaching and learning, including whether there is a role for the ECTL in helping faculty incorporate the information gained from assessment in their teaching.

The task force may recommend that assessment focus initially on a few specific learning outcomes, such as assessment of written communication and critical and creative thinking in the foundational courses. They may wish to develop a timeline over which all learning outcomes are assessed, either by the Assessment Fellows and Assessment Coordinators Committee, or by departments and colleges.

7. Other aspects of implementation.

The task force should feel free to identify and address other issues that are necessary for the implementation of the revised University Studies. They may wish to decide upon a name for UW's new general education program, for instance: is it USP 2014 or something different?

8. Communicating the implementation plan and procedures to the UW community.

Unlike the Stage 1 and Stage 2 task forces, whose job was to write a report, the Stage 3 task force will be designing an implementation plan, communicating it to the faculty, and putting in place the process by which the revised University Studies Program will be run and assessed. The task force will want to consider various means for communicating this information. Among likely communications avenues is a new general education website; Academic Affairs would be happy to assist in developing such a website. Academic Affairs also has provided staff support to the University Studies Committee and could likewise provide a comparable level of support for the new program.

There are few issues more central to our core mission than our undergraduate general education curriculum. UW is fortunate that so many faculty members contributed to its revision, and that you have committed to guide its implementation. Thank you all very much.