

**UW-Madison University-wide Expectations for Undergraduate Student Learning:
Audit of Language in Existing Documents and Recommendation
July 2007**

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This audit seeks to review expectations for student learning³ that are university-wide and that have already been articulated and embraced by the university community. The intention is not to “start over” but rather to synthesize existing statements into a recommendation for a UW-Madison-specific articulation of expectations for student learning.

The 2003 Assessment Plan calls for every academic program to have an assessment plan and to do something (anything!) annually to evaluate student learning as measured against program goals. The 2003 Assessment Plan focused on individual academic units and intentionally laid aside the specification of University-wide expectations for student learning.

It has become increasingly clear that explicit university-wide expectations (or outcomes) for student learning are necessary as a framework or touchstone for setting a university-level direction. Such expectations are also necessary to construct a case of evidence for achieving those standards at the university-level (in contrast to the program level). Four years ago we recognized that learning goals are embedded in the breadth of the curriculum and such an undertaking seemed redundant with the activities for academic programs and especially with the University-wide roles of the activities around general education. At this time, we conclude that this needs to be supplemented with explicit, university-wide expectation for student learning.

We start with a **catalog** (page 2) of expressed expectations excerpted for student learning excerpted from existing documents. These expectations are associated with existing curricular elements or other features of the learning experience that have explicit and/or implicit statements of expectations for student learning.

We provide a summary of what we observe and a **recommendation** (page 4) to articulate campus-wide expectations for student learning.

Catalog of Expressed Expectations for Student Learning

This cataloging of expectations for student learning is excerpted from existing UW-Madison documents. This list illustrates ways in which learning has been framed over time. The texts are verbatim quotes from university documents and web sites. A synthesis of findings follows the list.

1. Mission and Purpose of the **General Education** requirements at UW-Madison:

The purpose of the General Education requirements is to **ensure that every graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison acquires the essential core of an undergraduate**

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³ Expectations for student learning is synonymous with student learning outcomes. We prefer to use the term “expectations” because it is more readily understood and avoids the connotations of jargon associated with “outcomes”.

education that establishes the foundations for living a productive life, being a citizen of the world, appreciating aesthetic values, and engaging in life-long learning in a continually changing world. For this reason, these core requirements provide for breadth across the humanities and arts, social studies, biological sciences and physical sciences; competence in communication, critical thinking and analytical skills appropriate for a university-educated person; and investigation of the issues raised by living in a culturally diverse society.

2. Working Criteria for **Communication-A** Courses

- a basic course in communication skills at the college level, developing student abilities in writing and public speaking, for both exposition and argumentation. As such, the course is to serve as a general foundation in the central skills and conventions required for student success in a variety of subsequent course work, as well as in careers after college.

The course will advance basic skills in

- the four modes of literacy: writing, speaking, reading & listening, with special emphasis on writing
- Critical thinking
- Information-seeking skills and strategies

3. Criteria for **Communications-B** Courses

- a low-enrollment course involving substantial instruction in the four modes of literacy (speaking, reading, writing, and listening), with emphasis on speaking and writing, either in the conventions of specific fields or in more advanced courses in communication.

Develop advanced skills in

- critical reading, logical thinking, and the use of evidence
- the use of appropriate style and disciplinary conventions in writing and speaking
- the productive use of core library resources specific to the discipline

4. **Quantitative Reasoning**

- the process of forming conclusions, judgments or inferences from quantitative information. Aspects: the recognition and construction of valid mathematical models that represent quantitative information; the analysis and manipulation of these models; the drawing of conclusions, predictions or inferences on the basis of this analysis; and the assessment of the reasonableness of these conclusions.

Criteria for a **QR-A course**: provide students with skills in mathematics, computer science, statistics or formal logic that are needed for dealing with quantitative information. The skills must be broad-based in order that they have a positive impact on the readiness of students to take a QR-B course in a variety of disciplines.

Criteria for a **QR-B course**: must make significant use of quantitative tools in the context of the other course material, for example:

- the recognition and construction of mathematical models and/or hypotheses that represent quantitative information,
- the evaluation of these models and hypotheses,
- the analysis and manipulation of mathematical models,
- the drawing of logical conclusions, predictions or inferences, and
- the assessment of the reasonableness of conclusions.

5. Undergraduate **Ethnic Studies** General Education Requirement

The University of Wisconsin-Madison is committed to fostering an understanding and appreciation of diversity, in the belief that doing so will:

- Better prepare students for life and careers in an increasingly multicultural U.S. environment,
- Add breadth and depth to the University curriculum, and
- Improve the campus climate.

One of the University's overarching goals is to infuse the curriculum in all disciplines with diversity, including those where traditionally it has been absent.

6. The Morgridge Center for Public Service **promotes citizenship and learning** through service within local, national and global communities. The Center builds on the Wisconsin Idea, a strong tradition of service to the community by students, faculty and alumni.

- Involvement -- Encourages students to participate in public service both as a contribution to a just and caring society and to strengthen their educational and personal growth.
- Leadership -- Fosters student initiative in creating, developing and evaluating service experiences.
- Learning -- Expands the campus teaching and learning environment by supporting the development of service-learning courses and learning experiences outside the classroom.
- Citizenship -- Promotes and supports a university-wide commitment to social change through public service.

7. Strategic Priority - Accelerate **Internationalization**

- Promote international education for the professions
- Promote multicultural understanding through expanded overseas experiences and new international learning opportunities for the campus community

8. Strategic Priority – Promote **Research**

Innovative and prolific scholarly investigation is synonymous with UW–Madison, and the commitment to continued research preeminence shall remain intense and unambiguous. We must be flexible and adaptive to emergent, as well as established, research opportunities, to new strategies for allocating resources, and to paths of productive inquiry in all fields, from the arts and humanities to the sciences.

Goals ... To expand and invigorate research and educational opportunities for students

9. Wisconsin Experience, Wisconsin Idea (Berquam, Brower)

The Wisconsin Experience is grounded in the Wisconsin Idea, a 100 year old idea that **what we do matters**. The Wisconsin Idea calls for our efforts to have an impact on the world beyond our campus borders.... This Wisconsin Experience produces graduates who are creative problem-solvers, who know how to integrate empirical analysis and passion, who seek out new knowledge, and who are adaptable to new technologies and new situations, and who are engaged citizens of the world.

10. Essential Learning Outcomes (LEAP/AACU's Liberal Education and America's Promise initiative, based on research with colleges, universities, the business community, and an analysis of accreditation requirements of business, education, nursing, and engineering.)

[Note: Wisconsin is the first official pilot state for the LEAP campaign. Jolanda Vanderwal Taylor and Nancy Westphal-Johnson are UW-Madison representatives to the Wisconsin LEAP campaign.]

Synthesis, Summary and Recommendations

Some recurring themes are present in this catalog of expectations for student learning and the student experience. The idea that UW-Madison strives to educate graduates who are prepared to do what matters is a recurring theme. The path is to develop a range of skills -- communication skills, quantitative and analytical skills, and breadth and depth of knowledge -- within curricula that include general education requirements along with requirements for depth in at least one major field. The curricular experience is extended by the Wisconsin Experience - engagement with a broad range of curricular and out-of-classroom experiences that reward curiosity, innovation, leadership, passion, and productive engagement with the state and the world.

In general, the expectations for learning that have been described for UW-Madison students in various documents are consistent with the Essential Learning Outcomes that have been developed by the AACU in the course of a multi-year study (see 10 above).

Recommendation: That UW-Madison develop and adopt institution-wide expectations for student learning, based on the language used for the Essential Learning Outcomes identified through LEAP. These expectations would be framed by the overarching idea that UW-Madison strives to educate graduates who are prepared to have significant impact in the world and that the Wisconsin Experience is the vehicle for achieving those expectations (see 9 above).

Students should prepare for the twenty-first century by gaining:

- Knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural worlds
 - through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts
 - *focused* by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring.
- Intellectual and practical skills, including
 - inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication, quantitative literacy, information literacy, teamwork and problem solving
 - *practiced extensively*, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively problems, projects, and standard for performance.
- Personal and social responsibility, including
 - civic knowledge and engagement (local and global), intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, foundations and skills for lifelong learning
 - *anchored* through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges.
- Integrative learning, including
 - synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized skills
 - *demonstrated* through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems.