

**NCA Status Report
General Studies Program Assessment
University of Nebraska Kearney
2008-2011**

This status report on assessment of General Studies at University of Nebraska Kearney (UNK) is based on input from the Advancement Section of the Higher Learning Commission's feedback report from the Focused Visit of 2008. The Commission required a report on the structure, student learning outcomes, assessment plan, and implementation status of each outcome. What follows is summary and documentary evidence of UNK's compliance with NCA recommendations.

Background

The assessment of General Studies was found to be problematic by the evaluation team of the Higher Learning Commission during the 2008 Focused Visit. Despite the efforts of the Assessment Office, the General Studies Director and Council, and departments and faculty across campus to address General Studies assessment issues from the 2004 Accreditation Visit, the department-based approach that had been used to assess General Studies continued to be problematic. This resulted in NCA's requirement for a progress report on General Studies assessment in April, 2011.

The institution was charged with reformulating the General Studies curriculum into "a coherent program of study," including a core set of agreed upon student learning outcomes, a curriculum to support the achievement of those outcomes, and a plan to assess student achievement (2008 Focused Visit, Assurance E-1).

The HLC evaluator's comments in the feedback report focused on the need for the following changes in General Studies Assessment:

- 1) Consistent interpretation of General Studies learning outcomes across departments;
- 2) Common methods and instruments used to measure General Studies outcomes; and
- 3) Standardized rubrics used to evaluate performance.

1) Structure of the Renewed General Studies Curriculum

Before the Focused Visit

The previous General Studies Program (see Appendix A) consisted of 45 hours that students chose "cafeteria style" from the following categories: English Language; Foreign Language; Humanities; Mathematics, Statistics & Computer Science; Natural Sciences; Social & Behavioral Sciences; and Personal Development. The required courses ENG 101 and ENG 102 (Expository Writing I and II) were taken sequentially. Other than those two courses, the general education program was not scaffolded – students would take their chosen courses in any order.

Progress since the Focused Visit

Between 2008 and 2010, the university developed and implemented a new General Studies curriculum (see Appendix A). This new program is carefully articulated to address the

institutional mission and culture, while following NCA recommendations and best practices in the profession. The curriculum is structured sequentially, beginning with a freshman seminar (or “Portal” course) that focuses on 1) strengthening critical thinking skills, and 2) helping orient new students to the enhanced standards of higher education. Concurrent with the Portal course, beginning students also take Foundational Core courses in written communication, oral communication, mathematics, and democracy. These initial courses are intended to give students the necessary communication and quantitative skills, and a fundamental understanding of the principles of democracy, in order to prepare them for further general education courses. After the Foundational Core courses, students select courses from six Distribution categories: Aesthetics, Humanities, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Analytical & Quantitative Thought, and Wellness. The final piece of the curriculum is the junior level Capstone course, which is an interdisciplinary experience that requires each student to create and submit an original Capstone project. The project requires that students demonstrate that they have met the program level outcomes for General Studies.

The new General Studies program is intended to place sequential, increasing cognitive and academic demands on students from the Portal through the Capstone courses. By completion of the General Studies program, it is believed that students will have achieved a significant, benchmark-level capacity for independent, critical thought. Student achievement within the scaffolded curriculum is being assessed using common assessment instruments and a common rubric in each category of General Studies (see Appendix B), both of which are described below.

2) General Studies Learning Outcomes

Before the Focused Visit

HLC Evaluators noted that, “*As it currently stands, there does not appear to be a clear, shared definition, nor understanding of the learning outcomes for the General Studies program*” (2008 Focused Visit, Assurance B-1).

The learning outcomes for the previous general education program had been written and approved in the early 1990’s, and so did not reflect current thinking and best practices. While many were measurable learning outcomes, some of them were overly broad (e.g. “Students will demonstrate the development of skills, behaviors and problem solving strategies necessary to prevail in the contemporary world”). Few faculty members were even aware of what the learning outcomes were. Hence, neither faculty nor students shared an understanding of, nor worked toward achieving those outcomes.

Progress since the Focused Visit

To address this issue, standardized learning outcomes have been developed and have been used in all General Studies categories and courses since inception of the new program in fall 2010 (see Appendix C). These learning outcomes were developed and refined over a three year period with the involvement of many faculty from across campus. Each of the learning outcomes is formulated such that they involve only one skill or ability and one level of accomplishment. The initial list of learning outcomes was developed at the Faculty Senate Roundtable discussions in 2006-08 and was widely shared with faculty across the campus in presentations, surveys, focus

groups, and feedback meetings at the department, college, and university level.

All courses proposed for inclusion in the new General Studies program must have approved category and program level outcomes as part of the course; those outcomes must now be listed prominently in each course syllabus; and faculty teaching each General Studies course must collect assessment data on these learning outcomes during the course. Adherence to these requirements is monitored by the General Studies director and General Studies Council. Courses not adhering will be identified through direct assessment data and student surveys, and the department/faculty will be given the opportunity to correct the deficiency. If requirements are not met within one semester, the course will be dropped from the General Studies Program.

Creation of common learning outcomes with shared definitions occurred in fall 2009 and was implemented in all General Studies courses beginning in 2010. Revision of learning outcomes is possible over time as formative assessment data are collected in the new program.

3) Common Assessment Methods and Instruments

Before the Focused Visit

HLC evaluators found that, *“Each department that is teaching courses in General Studies is assessing their interpretation of the outcomes in their own way, using their own instruments. As such, it is impossible to determine whether UNK students are achieving at an acceptable level when the level shifts from course to course, and program to program.”* (2008 Focused Visit, Assurance B-1).

Progress since the Focused Visit

Addressing this issue required the development of common assessment assignments that are used to evaluate each of the learning outcomes identified for the program. These items are generic enough to be used across disciplines, and they provide enough flexibility for faculty to determine the specific content to be evaluated in their course. Careful attention was given to ensure that the assessment instruments matched the student outcomes.

In each General Studies course, beginning fall 2010 with the Portal courses, students have been required to submit one assignment –designated as a General Studies assessment– as part of their grade in the course. Faculty members have six different assessment assignments they can choose from to use for their course. The six possible assessment questions all address the common learning outcomes and provide consistent assessment of those outcomes. Evaluation of the assessment assignments is completed using a common rubric that is intended to capture the learning outcomes for the course category. Since common instruments and a common rubric are being implemented in all courses within a given category of General Studies, the assessments will provide comparable data and valid answers to the question, “What are our General Studies students learning?”

A rolling implementation of common assessment measures throughout the General Studies program began in fall 2010 with the Portal Courses and will be in place in all General Studies

courses by spring 2012. The common assessments will be implemented in each area by the semester indicated below to insure assessment data are reported in all areas by fall 2013.

1. Portal courses — fall 2010
2. Capstone courses — spring 2011
3. Foundational Core courses — fall 2011
4. Distribution courses — spring 2012

Changes to the common assessment assignments as selected by faculty, or creation of additional assessment items may occur as a result of formative evaluations that will be ongoing over the next several years.

In addition to the common assessment items, General Studies will continue to use the ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) standardized tests of Essay Writing and Critical Thinking to provide program level assessment of two of the major program level outcomes. Implementation of CAAP in the General Studies program began in fall 2007 when the two tests were administered to a random sample of freshman and seniors. The schedule for administering CAAP as part of General Studies assessment follows a 3-year cycle. Hence, in fall 2010, 211 freshman students in a random sample of Portal courses took the CAAP critical thinking and essay writing tests to provide freshman data, and in spring 2011, 204 seniors took the same tests to provide input from students who are within 6 months of graduation (a guideline of the Voluntary System of Accountability).

4) Standardized Rubrics

Before the Focused Visit

HLC evaluators indicated that, “***Many assessment ‘rubrics’ are simply numerical scales, without descriptions of performance characteristics at each level. Creating standard rubrics for the outcomes would be a tremendous help when it comes time for assessing student achievement.***” (2008 Focused Visit, Assurance B-1)

The inconsistency of quality of rubrics and other measurement instruments, as identified by evaluators, was the result of each academic department’s creating its own instrument in an attempt to assess a traditional “cafeteria style” general education curriculum.

Progress since the Focused Visit

To address this concern, we conducted research to identify rubrics that could be used across the General Studies program to evaluate students’ performance, and that have been pilot tested to insure face validity and reliability. As a result of that investigation, UNK chose to adapt and use the rubrics of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) VALUE project. The first of the VALUE project related rubrics to be adapted was the rubric for the Portal courses. This rubric was used from the initial implementation of the new General Studies program in fall 2010. The rubric is designed to capture the learning outcomes of the Portal category. Evaluations of student work are now completed only by members of the faculty, (whereas in the past, some advanced undergraduate student workers helped in evaluating student work in one category of General Studies, oral communication).

All General Studies courses are required to incorporate one or more of the six program level learning outcomes, in addition to incorporating the learning outcomes of its given category of General Studies (e.g. “Humanities” or “Wellness”). When the students in a General Studies course are given the common assessment assignment used to evaluate these outcomes, their performance is then evaluated using the standardized rubrics. Faculty using the rubrics for scoring are trained on the use of the rubric to insure a common understanding of the descriptions of performance for each of the items in the rubric and to allow for greater inter-rater reliability. Similar rubrics will be used in the freshman level Portal courses and in the junior level Capstone course as a way of gauging value added at the program level.

Implementation of the standardized rubrics in the General Studies program began in fall 2010 with the Portal courses and will be in place in all General Studies courses by spring 2012. The process follows the same schedule as that of the implementation of the common assessment items, since the rubrics will be used to evaluate those items:

1. Portal courses — fall 2010
2. Capstone courses — spring 2011
3. Foundational Core courses — fall 2011
4. Distribution courses — spring 2012

Revision in the standardized rubrics is possible over time as formative assessment data are collected in the new program.

5) Faculty Development

Before the Focused Visit

HLC evaluators recommended that, “***Attention...be paid to the development of the new faculty related to assessment. To move to the next level, faculty assessment coordinators will need to be developed from ‘coordinators’ to ‘experts’ in assessment. Recognition, remuneration and rewards for excellence in assessment might be considered.***” (2008 Focused Visit, Advancement B-1).

Assessment efforts in General Studies had previously shown uneven results, as some departments seemed to grasp the essentials of assessment procedures while others struggled to do so. There was a need to educate faculty more broadly in the purposes of assessment, to standardize one General Studies assessment approach campus wide, and to enhance motivation by recognizing improvement and excellent work.

Progress since the Focused Visit

Several efforts have been undertaken to develop faculty expertise in assessment. Faculty who taught a Portal course in 2010-2011 first attended three orientations – an overview of General Studies assessment, an introduction to e-portfolios, and a training session on using the Portfolio rubric and evaluating student work using TaskStream. A website was established that serves as a one-stop location for information for both students and faculty about acquiring and using

TaskStream. As an incentive to learning and using the online e-portfolio system, faculty are receiving a onetime \$500 stipend if 90% or greater of students enrolled in their General Studies course submit their assessment assignment on TaskStream; if the instructor evaluates all of the submissions using TaskStream; and if the instructor attends all necessary orientations. Finally, excellence in assessment practices in the new General Studies program is also being recognized at annual Assessment Awards Luncheons on campus.

6) Logistics of Assessment in the New Program

Before the Focused Visit

Each department that offered General Studies courses was tasked with creating their own assessment plan, which included making their own assessment instrument and benchmarks. Each department also submitted an annual assessment report that included data they had collected. As a result, there were no comparative data across the program, and therefore no way to know conclusively what students were actually learning.

Progress since the Focused Visit

Data collection and analysis for assessment reporting in General Studies needed a more efficient method than tallying and sharing of assignment results. In addition, General Studies needed to be able to do some longitudinal analysis of student learning. As a result, the decision was made in spring 2010 to adopt an e-portfolio system for the archiving of student assessment assignments and for the ease of online grading and compiling of results. The application adopted for General Studies at UNK is TaskStream, which was already being used by UNK's College of Education as their e-portfolio system for majors.

Beginning in fall 2010, all students entering under the new General Studies program and taking their Portal course were required to purchase a license for TaskStream and then to upload their written General Studies assessment assignment to the application. This procedure provides an efficient way to handle all the assessment assignments and gives faculty an easy way to grade the assignments using the required rubric, which is available to them in TaskStream. Faculty received training on the use of TaskStream at the same time they took part in the training on the use of rubrics. The grading of the assignments in TaskStream allows the director of General Studies to compile the results from General Studies courses and to be able to perform data analysis on the results for reporting purposes.

Data from the common assessment assignments will be used at the department, college and institutional level to gauge quality of the General Studies program and to identify ways to improve student learning. The General Studies Council and director are charged with ensuring that the data are collected and analyzed, and then used formatively to improve the program and the quality of student learning.

Implementation of the TaskStream e-portfolio began in fall 2010 with students taking Portal courses and will be in place in all General Studies courses by spring 2012. The process follows the same schedule as that of the implementation of common assessment items and rubrics:

1. Portal courses — fall 2010
2. Capstone courses — spring 2011
3. Foundational Core courses — fall 2011
4. Distribution courses — spring 2012

Initial Results in the New General Studies Program

Following the implementation schedule as outlined above, UNK has collected one semester of data on the new General Studies program. Faculty members teaching a Portal course in fall 2010 selected one of the six common assessment assignments for their students and then evaluated the submitted assignments in TaskStream. Initial data indicate that the Portal courses are meeting the goals of strengthening new students' critical thinking skills (see Appendix D).

A faculty survey and student survey were also administered after the first semester and will continue to be administered each semester during the implementation period to provide feedback from both groups on their perception of the effectiveness of the learning outcomes and assessment procedures in the new General Studies program. Survey data from fall 2010 are being analyzed.

Summary of the New General Studies Program and Assessment Process

In the HLC report following the 2008 Focused Visit, the evaluators provided the following insight and positive feedback about the current General Studies renewal process:

“In many ways, UNK is in the enviable position of being able to create a truly outcomes-based General Studies program. Most schools wind up trying to retrofit learning outcomes onto an existing General Studies program that was never meant to actually function as a program. While possible, this approach often yields outcomes that are vague and immeasurable. A careful, systematic approach could yield a program that can serve as a model for other schools looking for a best-practice model in General Studies” (2008 Focused Visit, Advancement B-1).

UNK has taken seriously the Commission's recommendations for improving its general education curriculum and assessment procedures. The new program is designed to be sequential, guiding students in developing skills from lower level cognitive tasks to the mastery of increasingly higher level intellectual skills throughout the program.

The current renewal process began in 2005. It was based on a systematic review of best practices in higher education and involvement from a majority of faculty at UNK. Implementation of the process will occur over a 3-year period (2010-2013) allowing the university to collect data on the program and to make changes as needed to create an outstanding general education program. The program is outcomes based and uses common assessment data and rubrics to determine the value of the program and the level of student learning. With the implementation of an e-portfolio for the program, UNK is in the position of being able to collect longitudinal data to ensure continuous improvement in the program over time.

APPENDIX A

NEW GENERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM
EFFECTIVE FALL 2010

45 credit hours: 12 hour core, 3 hour Portal, 27 hour distribution, 3 hour capstone

I Foundational Core – 12 hours					
Written Communication 3 hours	Math for the Liberal Arts 3 hours OR college algebra & above		Oral Communication 3 hours	Democracy in Perspective 3 hours	
II Portal Course – 3 hours					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Primary purpose of the course is to develop critical thinking skills. ▪ Students are strongly encouraged to take the Portal in the first two semesters. ▪ Students choose to take the Portal in any discipline. ▪ Students transferring in 24+ hours of General Studies credit are exempt from taking the Portal, but must still complete a total of 45 hours of General Studies credit. 					
III Distribution – 27 hours (22 hours in minimum requirements, 5 hours of electives)					
Aesthetics 3-6 hours	Humanities 6-9 hours in at least two disciplines	Social Sciences 6-9 hours in at least two disciplines	Natural Sciences 7-11 hours in at least two disciplines <i>(at least one lab)</i>	Analytical & Quantitative Thought 0-6 hours	Wellness 0-6 hours
IV Capstone Course – 3 hours					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Course is interdisciplinary and focuses on critical thinking. ▪ Open to juniors and seniors and to students within 6 hours of completion of their General Studies requirements. ▪ Students choose to take the Capstone in any discipline. ▪ Requires creation of an original semester project. 					

Source: www.unk.edu/academicaffairs/generalstudies

APPENDIX A (continued)

PREVIOUS GENERAL STUDIES CURRICULUM
EFFECTIVE THROUGH SPRING 2010

45 credit hours

I English Language, 6-9 hours	II Foreign Language, 0-3 hours
English Language, 3-6 hours Speech, 3 hours	Foreign Language (200 level only), 0-3 hours
III Humanities, 9-15 hours	IV Math, Stats & Computer Sci, 3-6 hours
Literary Perspective, 3-6 hours	Math / Statistics, 3-6 hours
Aesthetic Perspective, 3-6 hours	
Historical Perspective, 3-6 hours	Computer Science, 0-3 hours
Philosophical Perspective, 0-6 hours	
V Natural Sciences, 7-15 hours Courses takes in 2+ departments (one course with lab)	VI Behavioral & Social Sciences, 9-15 hours
Biology department Chemistry department Geography & Earth Science department Physics department	Economic perspective, 3-6 hours
	Social perspective, 0-6 hours
	Political perspective, 0-6 hours
	Geographical perspective, 0-6 hours
	Behavioral perspective, 0-6 hours
VII Personal Development, 2-3 hours	
Business Information Systems Criminal Justice Computer Science Family Studies & Interior Design Industrial Technology Journalism & Mass Communication Music Physical Education Social Work Women's Studies	
VIII Capstone, 0-1 hours	
<i>This course was never developed.</i>	

Source: <http://aaunk.unk.edu/catalogs/09-10cat/gs/gstoc.asp>

APPENDIX B
COMMON ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENTS & RUBRIC
FOR PORTAL COURSES

Option 1: Integrated Summary

Instructor provides students with 3-4 articles targeting a specific course concept, phenomena or theory. From these articles, students are instructed:

- *Your task is to show a critical understanding of the literature relevant to XXX. From the articles provided, select the articles that are most relevant to furthering our understanding of XXX. Using the selected articles, write an integrated summary that demonstrates a critical understanding of XXX within the context of the discipline. Your summary should include a brief overview of XXX and an integrated discussion of the selected articles. The entire integrated summary should be 2-3 double-spaced pages (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.*

*Assignment could be specifically tailored to address cultural issues or civic engagement by the nature of the articles selected. If targeting cultural issues, the following directions could be added to the assignment:

- *Your summary should include a brief overview of XXX, an integrated discussion of the selected articles, and an analysis of the cultural issues of XXX within a global context.*

If targeting civic engagement, the following directions could be added to the basic assignment:

- *Your summary should include a brief overview of XXX, an integrated discussion of the selected articles, and an analysis of XXX as it applies to civic engagement / democracy in a modern society.*

Option 1 targets program-level outcomes:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) --
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
- 5) Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
- 6) Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

Option 2: Current Event Analysis

Instructor selects a current event relevant to issues, concepts or theories targeted in the class*. Students are given the current event topic and instructed:

- *Your task is to analyze XXX using the theories, concepts and ideas learned in this class. Using both the Internet and your textbook as a resource, you should identify three credible, reliable references from which to base your analysis. Your analysis should demonstrate a critical understanding of XXX as it relates to the discipline; clearly show how selected course concepts and theories can be used to inform our understanding of*

XXX. Your analysis should be 2-3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.

*Assignment could be specifically tailored to address cultural issues or civic engagement by the nature of the current event selected. If targeting cultural issues, the following directions could be added to the assignment:

- *Your analysis should demonstrate a critical understanding of XXX as it relates to the discipline and our global society; clearly show how selected course concepts and theories can be used to inform our understanding of XXX and highlight cultural issues of XXX within a global context.*

If targeting civic engagement, the following directions could be added to the basic assignment:

- *Your analysis should demonstrate a critical understanding of XXX as it relates to the discipline and our democratic society; clearly show how selected course concepts and theories can be used to inform our understanding of XXX and highlight XXX as it applies to civic engagement / democracy in our modern society.*

Option 2 targets program-level outcomes:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) --
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
- 5) Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
- 6) Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

Option 3: Controversial Issue Analysis

Students are instructed:

- *As you know more about XXX (discipline name), you discover that there are many issues and topics in which even the experts can't agree. Take the controversial issue provided by your instructor and find two reliable, credible sources on each side of the controversy and write an integrated summary to show the research and findings for both sides of the debate. In addition, you should provide a critical analysis of the support for each position to formulate (and share) your own informed position on the controversy. Your analysis should be 2- 3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.*

*Assignment could be specifically tailored to address cultural issues by the nature of the discipline; some courses or topics may lend themselves to controversial issues that are directly tied to cultural awareness and/or civic engagement. In addition, assignment could be modified in which the instructor selects the controversial issue to ensure that it targets one of these dimensions.

** Assignment could be modified to be an oral debate in which students are assigned to one side of a controversial issue and must be able to support and defend their position in a live debate format.

Target program-level outcomes:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
 - 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
 - 3) **Communicate effectively in spoken form.
 - 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
 - 5) *Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
-

Option 4: Research Proposal

Instructor selects a basic research article that is appropriate to the discipline. Students are given the article and instructed:

- *Read the article XXX and reflect on the value of the study as well as the meaning and significance of the conclusions. Your task is to propose a follow-up study to either: 1) address flaws, shortcomings or weaknesses of the original study; or 2) expand the original findings by furthering our understanding of the relevant issues. Your proposal should briefly justify your rationale for the target of the follow-up study, provide a clear hypothesis and outline the relevant methodology and considerations necessary to implement your follow-up study. You should use language and methodologies relevant to your discipline. Your proposal should be 2- 3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.*

Assignment could be specifically tailored to address cultural issues or civic engagement by the nature of the article selected; some articles/topics/disciplines may lend themselves directly to studies that are tied to cultural awareness and/or civic engagement.

*In addition, a component of the analysis could directly ask students to address the issue of cultural bias as a component of the selected research article.

**Furthermore, if relevant, students could be asked to directly discuss the relevance to civic engagement by addressing the value of the research findings for social change or societal impact.

Option 4 targets program-level outcomes:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
 - 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
 - 3) N/A
 - 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
 - 5) *Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
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Option 5: Community Introspection

Students are instructed:

- *The world in which we live is complex interaction of social, political, and interpersonal forces that are shaped by our understanding of science, history and art. Your task in the community introspection is to select one social policy, law or community practice that can be linked back to your understanding of XXX (discipline). In your introspective report, you should discuss the relationship between XXX and relevant social*

policy/law/practice, highlight ways to use your knowledge about XXX to impact civic action and reflect upon your role in civic life, politics and government. Your introspection should be 2- 3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.

*Assignment could be modified to integrate cultural awareness issues by adding the following:

- *In your introspective report, you should discuss the relationship between XXX and relevant social policy/law/practice, highlight ways to use your knowledge about XXX to impact civic action, articulate an awareness of cultural bias, relevance or perspective, and reflect upon your role in civic life, politics and government.*

Target program-level outcomes:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) --
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
- 5) *Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
- 6) Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

Option 6: Media Analysis

Instructor selects a topic addressed in the global media community that is relevant to course concepts, issues or theories. Students are instructed to:

- *Utilizing your textbook and the Internet as resources, your task is to find two different cultural perspectives as indicated by media reports about XXX. You will conduct a web search for XXX and find relevant, reliable media reports that represent different cultural perspectives surrounding the target issue. Compare and contrast how different cultural perspectives describe XXX then critically apply course concepts to highlight how the academic community in our culture understands the issue. Your media analysis should be 2- 3 pages double-spaced (not including title or reference page) and should be written in a style appropriate to the discipline.*

Option 6 targets program-level outcomes:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task.
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning.
- 3) --
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form.
- 5) Analyze cultural issues within a global context.

Portal Course Rubric
Spring 2011 (revision of the initial version used in Fall 2010)

This rubric addresses the following General Studies learning outcomes:

Program Level #1 – Evaluate information appropriate to the task; **Program Level #2** – Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning; **Program Level #4** – Communicate effectively in written form; **Portal #2** – Interpret an argument through engaged discourse within the discipline; **Portal #3** – Construct a cogent argument pertaining to the course topic.

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a Does not meet criteria to any work sample that does not meet Beginning level performance.

	Does not meet criteria for Beginning	Beginning	Developing	Proficient	Advanced
1) Student's Position (Perspective, Thesis / Hypothesis)	---	Student's position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) is implied but not stated.	Student's position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) is stated, but is simplistic or obvious.	Student's position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) takes into account the complexities of an issue.	Student's position (perspective, thesis / hypothesis) synthesizes various viewpoints in evaluating the complexities of an issue.
2) Content Development	---	Uses related content to develop simple ideas in some parts of the work.	Uses related content to develop ideas through most of the work.	Uses relevant, persuasive content to develop ideas throughout the work.	Uses relevant and compelling content to illustrate mastery of the subject, conveying the writer's understanding, and shaping the whole work.
3) Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically	---	Shows minimal awareness of assumptions (sometimes labels assertions as assumptions).	Shows emerging awareness of others' assumptions.	Identifies and questions their own and others' assumptions. Uses relevant contexts when presenting a position.	Thoroughly analyzes their own and others' assumptions. Evaluates all relevant contexts when presenting a position.
4) Conclusions and Related Outcomes (Implications and Consequences)	---	Conclusion is stated, and is loosely connected to the information discussed.	Conclusion is tied to information discussed, and to some related implications.	Conclusion is logically tied to a range of information, including opposing viewpoints; related implications are identified.	Conclusions and related implications reflect fully informed evaluation.

APPENDIX C
GENERAL STUDIES LEARNING OUTCOMES

PROGRAM-LEVEL OUTCOMES

(General Studies courses must meet at least one program-level outcome)

Students can:

- 1) Evaluate information appropriate to the task;
- 2) Apply principles of critical thinking to demonstrate integrative learning;
- 3) Communicate effectively in spoken form;
- 4) Communicate effectively in written form;
- 5) Analyze cultural issues within a global context.
- 6) Evaluate in context significant concepts relating to democracy.

I. FOUNDATIONAL CORE

Written Communication outcomes *(Courses must meet all outcomes)*

Students can:

- 1) Discern a writer's argument or purpose.
- 2) Use appropriate sources responsibly.
- 3) Use context-appropriate conventions of written English.
- 4) Form and support a coherent position on an issue.
- 5) Write in a manner appropriate to the audience and context.

Math Learning outcomes *(Courses must meet all outcomes)*

Students can:

- 1) Apply mathematical logic to solve equations.
- 2) Describe problems using mathematical language.
- 3) Solve problems given in mathematical language using mathematical or statistical tools.
- 4) Interpret numerical data or graphical information using mathematical concepts and methods.
- 5) Construct logical arguments using mathematical language and concepts.
- 6) Use mathematical software effectively.

Oral Communication outcomes *(Courses must meet all outcomes)*

Students can:

- 1) Evaluate appropriate sources.
- 2) Utilize effective verbal and non-verbal expressions.
- 3) Deliver effective speeches appropriate to the context.
- 4) Orally present a coherent position on an issue.
- 5) Assess oral argumentation as a critical consumer.

Democracy in Perspective outcomes *(Courses must meet all outcomes)*

Students can:

- 1) Analyze the development of democratic governance in more than one setting.

- 2) Explain the roles that democratic concepts, including individual rights, play in a just democracy.
- 3) Analyze how citizens engage in democracy.
- 4) Evaluate democratic practices across different dimensions (such as time, socioeconomic conditions, cultures, and political boundaries).

II. PORTAL

Portal outcomes (*Courses must meet all outcomes*)

Students can:

- 1) Analyze critical issues confronting the individual and society, including a global context.
- 2) Interpret an argument through engaged discourse within the discipline.
- 3) Construct a cogent argument pertaining to the course topic.

III. DISTRIBUTION

(Distribution courses must meet learning outcome #1 and a majority of the remaining outcomes in their respective category.)

Aesthetics outcomes

Students can:

- 1) Articulate the relevance of the Aesthetics course to their general education.
- 2) Explain the significance of a work of art within its context (i.e. cultural, historical).
- 3) Identify the structure of a work of art by describing its elements.
- 4) Interpret a work of art using concepts appropriate to its medium.
- 5) Distinguish between works of art from various time periods and cultures.

Humanities outcomes

Students can:

- 1) Articulate the relevance of the Humanities course to their general education.
- 2) Analyze primary sources using methodologies appropriate to disciplines in the Humanities.
- 3) Create coherent positions based on the interpretation of primary sources.
- 4) Communicate effectively using the modes of discourse appropriate to the discipline.
- 5) Evaluate primary sources in cultural, historical, literary, or philosophical contexts.

Social Sciences outcomes

Students can:

- 1) Articulate the relevance of the Social Science course to their general education.
- 2) Describe basic concepts and methods used in a social science discipline.
- 3) Demonstrate how basic concepts and methods from a social science discipline explain individual or group behavior.
- 4) Evaluate the connection between social science research and social or political policy.
- 5) Apply concepts and methods from a social science discipline to social science research.

Natural Sciences outcomes

Students can:

- 1) Articulate the relevance of the Natural Science course to their general education.
- 2) Explain how knowledge of natural science is applicable to their lives.
- 3) Apply appropriate scientific methodology within one of the natural sciences.
- 4) Evaluate the validity and limitations of scientific theories and claims.
- 5) (Required for lab courses only) Analyze scientific data acquired through laboratory experiences in one of the natural sciences.

Analytical & Quantitative Thought outcomes

Students can:

- 1) Articulate the relevance of the Analytical & Quantitative Thought course to their general education.
- 2) Express formal relationships using various forms of analytical reasoning.
- 3) Define problems using techniques appropriate to the discipline.
- 4) Solve problems using techniques appropriate to the discipline.
- 5) Draw appropriate inferences from data in various forms.
- 6) Evaluate analytical results for reasonableness.

Wellness outcomes

Students can:

- 1) Articulate the relevance of the Wellness course to their general education.
- 2) Describe components of wellness.
- 3) Recognize the potential consequences of personal choices.
- 4) Analyze the roles of society in wellness promotion.
- 5) Develop an action strategy for wellness.

IV. CAPSTONE

Capstone outcomes (*Courses must meet all outcomes*)

Students can:

- 1) Evaluate information from more than one academic discipline.
- 2) Formulate logical connections between disciplines as they relate to the topic.
- 3) Employ the approach of more than one academic discipline in completing a Capstone project.
- 4) Synthesize knowledge related to the topic in completing a Capstone project.
- 5) Communicate effectively in the medium chosen for the Capstone project.

APPENDIX D
INITIAL ASSESSMENT DATA
FOR PORTAL COURSES

Data for the first semester of data collection are currently being analyzed.

Report:	Summary of Performance for Authors in portfolio: Portal Fall 2010 <u>Report Generated by TaskStream</u>
Program:	Portal Course - Fall 2010
# Authors:	492

BSAD 188 – Strgths & Skills 21st (BSAD 188 – GS Portal: Strgths & Skills 21st Cen Wkpl)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P1: Integrated Summary	16	1.88/4	46.88

CHEM 188 - Air is for Atmosphere (CHEM 188 - GS Portal: Air is for Atmosphere)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P1: Integrated Summary	10	1.78/4	44.38

CJUS 188-01 - Women and Children (CJUS 188-01 - GS Portal: Women and Children for Sale)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	19	1.61/4	40.13

CJUS 188-02 – Terrorism (CJUS 188-02 – GS Portal: Terrorism)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P2: Current Event Analysis	10	2.85/4	71.25

CSIS 188 - Cyber Crime (CSIS 188 - GS Portal: Cyber Crime)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P6: Media Analysis	18	3.14/4	78.56

ENG 188 - Talk about War (ENG 188 - GS Portal: Talk about War)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P6: Media Analysis	16	3.55/4	88.67

FIN 188 - Phil of Bus & Mkt Econ (FIN 188 - GS Portal: Philosophy of Business & Market Economics)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P1: Integrated Summary	0	0	0

FORL 188 - Paris & Berlin (FORL 188 - GS Portal: Paris & Berlin)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P2: Current Event Analysis	17	1.41/4	35.29

FSID 188 - Intimate Relationships (FSID 188 - GS Portal: Intimate Relationships)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P6: Media Analysis	14	2.36/4	58.93

GEOG 188 - Population Paradox (GEOG 188 - GS Portal: Population Paradox)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	10	2.93/4	73.13

HIST 188-01 - Viking World (HIST 188-01 - GS Portal: Viking World)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P1: Integrated Summary	16	3.09/4	77.34

HIST 188-02 - History of Warfare (HIST 188-02 - GS Portal: History of Warfare)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P1: Integrated Summary	12	2.75/4	68.75

HIST 188-03 - Robin Hood (HIST 188-03 - GS Portal: Robin Hood)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P6: Media Analysis	19	1.95/4	48.68

ITEC 188-04 - Career Dev/Achv Succ (ITEC 188-04 - GS Portal: Career Dev/Achv Succ (Meznarich))

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	21	1.21/4	30.36

ITEC 188-02 - Energy Gone Green (ITEC 188-02 - GS Portal: Energy Gone Green (Schiley))

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	18	3.71/4	92.71

ITEC 188-03 - Energy Gone Green (ITEC 188-03 - GS Portal: Energy Gone Green (Barry))

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	15	3.32/4	82.92

ITEC 188-01 - Career Dev/Achv Succ (ITEC 188-01 - GS Portal: Career Dev/Achv Succ (Benson))

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	24	1.24/4	30.99

MIS 188 - Art & Sci of Decision Mkg (MIS 188 - GS Portal: Art & Sci of Decision Mkg)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P2: Current Event Analysis	18	2.14/4	53.47

MKT 188 - Pop Cult & Mkt/Global Soc (MKT 188 - GS Portal: Pop Cult & Mkt/Global Soc)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P2: Current Event Analysis	19	2.46/4	61.51

MUS 188 - Amadeus (MUS 188 - GS Portal: Amadeus)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	11	3.43/4	85.8

PE 188-01 - The World is Fat (PE 188-01 - GS Portal: The World is Fat (Scantling))

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P1: Integrated Summary Analysis	18	2.68/4	67.01

PE 188-80 - Sport, New World Relig (PE 188-80 - GS Portal: Sport, New World Relig (Unruh))

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P1: Integrated Summary Analysis	14	3.36/4	83.93

PHIL 188 - Joy of Sales Resistance (PHIL 188 - GS Portal: Joy of Sales Resistance)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P2: Current Event Analysis	3	3.25/4	81.25

PHYS 188 - Energy, You & Mod World (PHYS 188 - GS Portal: Energy, You & Mod World)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P2: Current Event Analysis	4	2.56/4	64.06

PSCI 188 - Contemp Pol Iss: Enviro (PSCI 188 - GS Portal: Contemp Pol Issues: Environment)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	10	2.03/4	50.63

PSY 188 - Death, Soc & Human Exp (PSY 188 - GS Portal: Death, Soc & Human Exp)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P3: Controversial Issue Analysis	25	1.79/4	44.75

SOC 188 - Knowing Self in the World (SOC 188 - GS Portal: Knowing Self in the World)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P5: Community Introspection	27	1.58/4	39.58

SPCH 188 - Speeches Chg the World (SPCH 188 - GS Portal: Speeches that Changed the World)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P2: Current Event Analysis	6	2.96/4	73.96

TE 188 - Diversity, Dem & Am Dream (TE 188 - GS Portal: Diversity, Dem & Am Dream)

Folio Areas Assessed	Authors Evaluated	Raw Results	Average for Group (%)
P5: Community Introspection	0	0	0