

Report of the General Education/Liberal Arts Committee

June 23, 2006

The current task of the committee is to make recommendations for the implementation of the General Education component of the NEASC standards for academic programs, as given in the Appendix, in accordance with the NEASC evaluation team report, an excerpt of which is also included.

I.) **Description** (What's been done)

During the spring semester, 2005, the committee held public forums to solicit input and comments on the traits that are proposed to constitute CCRI's definition of the educated person. The results are available at the web page <http://www.ccri.edu/gened/mins22205.shtml>. Some 60 people made contributions. In order to reach a larger audience, a survey was conducted in June of 2005 resulting in 92 responses from faculty and 62 from staff. The results may be downloaded from <http://www.ccri.edu/gened/docs/index.shtml>.

In parallel with this activity, the committee has been working on the General Education requirements. In particular, it analyzed the programs at a number of peer colleges, a list of which is available at <http://www.ccri.edu/gened/collinks.shtml>.

During the fall of 2005 and spring of 2006 the wording of the definition of an educated person was refined and work continued on developing general education requirements that would be applicable to all of the programs in the college. Further input was received from department Chairs in April and May.

Based on that input, a revised survey was sent out for final approval and comment on the characteristics of an educated person. In addition, input was solicited concerning a controversial and as yet unresolved matter relating to the general education requirements: should the math and science requirements be separated so that all students would be required to take a course in both areas, or is it better to combine them into one category, leaving it up to the individual program and/or student to decide how to fulfill the requirement?

II.) **Appraisal** (What the current proposal is)

The committee has met to assess the results of the survey. Since it validates the recommendations concerning the educated person, its work in this area is complete.

CCRI's Proposed Definition of an Educated Person (as of June 19, 2006)

Communication: Use diverse methods and strategies appropriate to audience and purpose. Listen, read, write and speak effectively using text, graphics, media, and data.

Analysis: Think clearly, critically and creatively within and across the primary domains of knowledge. Integrate experience, reason and information as a foundation for judgement.

Problem Solving: Apply analysis and access needed information to develop successful strategies for solving diverse problems. Implement those strategies and evaluate their effectiveness.

Awareness of Social Responsibility: Evaluate ethical dimensions of decisions and the consequences of social actions.

Teamwork: Work effectively to accomplish tasks in groups. Weigh alternative points of view. Work collaboratively to reach conclusions and to set an appropriate course of action.

Cultural Perspectives: Demonstrate an understanding of global cultural and historical contexts and their impact on contemporary issues.

III.) Projection (What needs to be done)

The next challenge concerns the general education requirements. It is necessary to ascertain which programs would have the most difficulty meeting the proposed requirements (see appendix) and to arrive at an appropriate response. Dean Sisson has already examined individual programs to begin to address the first question. The committee needs to work with affected program directors/department chairs to examine the feasibility of implementing the proposed requirements. Ultimately, it may be necessary to have a discussion with NEASC concerning how the requirements can be met within the framework of specific programs.

CCRI's Proposed General Education Core

		Credit Hours
1 Course	Writing	3
1 Course	Arts & Humanities (ARTS, CHIN, ENGL, FREN, GERM, ITAL, JAPN, MUSIC, PHIL, PORT, RUSN, SPAN, SPCH, THEA)	3
2 Courses	Social Sciences (ECON, GEOG, HIST, POLS, PSYC, SOCS)	6
2 Courses	Mathematics/Science (ASTR, BIOL, CHEM, GEOL, MATH, OCEN, PHYS)	6 - 10
1 Course	General Education Elective (Dependent on Program Recommendations)	3/4
		21/26 Total

If the issues surrounding the general education requirements can be resolved over the summer, then it may be desirable to re-submit them through a survey for general approval in September, which would complete the committee's work in that area.

The final task concerns assessment. In the fall semester it seems likely that the work of this committee should be coordinated with that of the Assessment committee.

APPENDIX

NEASC Standards for The Academic Program

Undergraduate Degree Programs

General Education

- 4.15 The general education requirement is coherent and substantive. It embodies the institution's definition of an educated person and prepares students for the world in which they will live. The requirement informs the design of all general education courses, and provides criteria for its evaluation, including the assessment of what students learn.
- 4.16 The general education requirement in each undergraduate program ensures adequate breadth for all degree-seeking students by showing a balanced regard for what are traditionally referred to as the arts and humanities, the sciences including mathematics, and the social sciences. General education requirements include offerings that focus on the subject matter and methodologies of these three primary domains of knowledge as well as on their relationships to one another.
- 4.17 The institution ensures that all undergraduate students complete at least the equivalent of forty semester hours in a bachelor's degree program, or the equivalent of twenty semester hours in an associate's degree program in general education.
- 4.18 Graduates successfully completing an undergraduate program demonstrate competence in written and oral communication in English; the ability for scientific and quantitative reasoning, for critical analysis and logical thinking; and the capability for continuing learning, including the skills of information literacy. They also demonstrate knowledge and understanding of scientific, historical, and social phenomena, and a knowledge and appreciation of the aesthetic and ethical dimensions of humankind.

NEASC Evaluation Team Report – Excerpt from “Programs and Instruction”

Challenges/Recommendations

1. There is no evidence that the College's current definition of the “educated person”, as it is expressed through graduate student outcomes, is operationalized within the curriculum or assessed in terms of student learning within courses, programs, or as a degree completion requirement.
2. The College's Self-Study indicates that fifteen of CCRI's 60 associate degree programs have fewer general education courses than those required by the NEASC Standards. The curricula for all programs should be reviewed to ensure compliance with the Standards, and those that fall short of the relevant General Education requirements should be revised.
3. Defining and assessing student outcomes is a major challenge at CCRI. Objectives which specify knowledge and skills requirements are not generally defined within Catalog program descriptions; learning objectives appear on some course syllabi, but not on others; there is not always consistency in content coverage or student outcomes from one section to another of the same course; and there is only occasional mention of how specific student competencies will be

assessed. Once the College has validated or redefined “the educated person” a process for documenting related activities and outcomes within the curriculum, as well as assessment criteria and processes, will need to be put in place.