

To: President Antonucci and Executive Committee
From: Chris Cratsley, Interim Director of Assessment
Date: 10/28/11
Re: Comparing Fitchburg State University LA&S outcomes to AAC&U LEAP outcomes

The Board of Higher Education has requested that each University of Massachusetts, State University and Community College campus review local learning outcomes in comparison with LEAP outcomes and inform the DHE by November 1, 2011 about the degree of compatibility between the two. In voting to accept the Phase II Report of the Working Group on Student Learning Outcomes at its June 2011 meeting, the BHE asked campuses to undertake this review, which may be used by the DHE to consider the feasibility of a system-level program of learning outcomes and in preparing a proposal to the Association of American Colleges & Universities to become a LEAP partner state. Once a draft proposal to become a LEAP partner state has been developed, it will be circulated to the campuses for further review and comment in November of 2011.

During the 2010-2011 Academic Year, the All College Committee provided feedback to the President that was forwarded to the DHE about the overall design of the Vision Project and the Phase II recommendations of the Vision Project's Working Group on Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment. We also sought feedback from the campus community on the alignment between LEAP outcomes and our LA&S curriculum objectives. The alignment between these outcomes and objectives was the topic of a series of Assessment Afternoons at the CTL in the spring of 2011. These discussions involved not only looking at the LEAP outcomes themselves which are presented using broad terms like critical and creative thinking, but also by examining the AAC&U Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics which provide more detailed definitions and criteria for the LEAP learning outcomes. These VALUE rubrics were compared to our own LA&S rubrics and in some cases elements of the VALUE rubrics were integrated into our rubrics in an effort to improve our LA&S assessment efforts. The process of revising our rubrics was continued at a series of forums during the afternoon of our spring 2011 assessment day. The LEAP learning outcomes, VALUE rubrics and their potential alignment with our LA&S objectives and LA&S rubrics are outlined on the following pages. This document was refined by the LA&S council after being referred to them through the ACC.

There are 12 LEAP outcomes (<http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm>) in contrast to our 5 LA&S Objectives. In some cases our LA&S objectives are broad enough that they encompass several LEAP outcomes. Our statements about Problem Solving and Communication each include reference to a variety of aspects of student learning that can be found in the LEAP outcomes. Our Citizenship and Ethical Reasoning objectives correspond fairly closely with Civic knowledge and engagement and ethical reasoning and action LEAP outcomes respectively. In one case, our Aesthetic Appreciation objective there is no comparable LEAP outcome. Not only do the LEAP outcomes outnumber our LA&S objectives, but the ways in which they can be assessed also outnumber the range of assessments we have proposed for our LA&S curriculum. There are 15 VALUE rubrics as in some cases a LEAP outcome has rubrics for two different aspects of the outcome. Our current LA&S assessment plan proposes 7 rubrics because Communication and Problem Solving each have rubrics for two different aspects of the objectives. The language of our LA&S rubrics also differs in many cases from the VALUE rubrics. The table on the following page summarizes how our 7 assessments align with LEAP outcomes and also suggests some areas in which we continue to review whether we want assess other elements of our objectives that are related to LEAP outcomes. The end of this document provides more detailed language about our objectives and potential assessment with LEAP VALUE rubrics.

Summary of LEAP Learning Outcomes and related FSU Objectives and Assessments

LEAP Outcomes	Related FSU Objectives	Related FSU assessments	Potential future FSU assessments
	Aesthetic Appreciation	Aesthetic Appreciation through Aesthetic Expression	
Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World			
Inquiry and Analysis	Problem Solving	Problem Solving through Inquiry and Data Analysis	
Critical and Creative Thinking	Problem Solving and Citizenship	Citizenship through Critical Analysis of Events	
Written and oral communication	Communication	Written Communication Oral Communication	
Quantitative Literacy	Problem Solving	Problem Solving through Quantitative Literacy	
Information Literacy			
Teamwork and Problem Solving	Communication and Problem Solving		Reviewing other assessments of Communication and Problem Solving
Civic knowledge and engagement	Citizenship		Reviewing other assessments of Citizenship
Intercultural knowledge and competence	Citizenship		Reviewing other assessments of Citizenship
Ethical Reasoning and action	Ethical Reasoning	Ethical Reasoning when Making Choices	
Foundations and skills for lifelong learning			
Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies	Problem Solving		Reviewing other assessments of Problem Solving

Summary of LA&S Objectives and rubrics and related LEAP outcomes and VALUE rubrics

The summary that follows uses the language from the original ACC proposal that established the LA&S objectives and definitions provided in the VALUE rubrics to compare the objectives, outcomes and related assessments.

Aesthetic Appreciation

Students will examine various forms of artistic and literary works, understand the contexts from which they emerge and be able to articulate and defend their meanings and values.

- Assessed with Aesthetic Appreciation through Aesthetic Expression rubric

There are no comparable LEAP outcomes or VALUE rubrics

Communication

Students will speak, read, write and listen to create and understand meanings using a variety of media. They will recognize how to participate in or lead groups to accomplish goals.

- Assessed with Written Communication rubric
- Assessed with Oral Communication rubric

Related LEAP outcomes that are assessed by Fitchburg State University:

Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images. Written communication abilities develop through iterative experiences across the curriculum.

Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners' attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

Related LEAP outcomes that are not assessed:

Reading is "the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language" (Snow et al., 2002).

Teamwork is behaviors under the control of individual team members (effort they put into team tasks, their manner of interacting with others on team, and the quantity and quality of contributions they make to team discussions.)

Problem Solving

Students will think critically and synthesize ideas within and across disciplines. They will fuse experience, training and research in to considered judgment, then working individually or with others, form problem-solving strategies and evaluate their effectiveness. Among these strategies, students will analyze and interpret data as a means to evaluate arguments and make informed choices.

- Assessed with Problem Solving through Inquiry and Data Analysis rubric
- Assessed with Problem Solving through Quantitative Literacy rubric

Related LEAP outcomes that are assessed:

Inquiry is the ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand. – The National Forum on Information Literacy

Quantitative Literacy (QL) – also known as Numeracy or Quantitative Reasoning (QR) – is a "habit of mind," competency, and comfort in working with numerical data. Individuals with strong QL skills possess the ability to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations. They understand and can create sophisticated arguments supported by quantitative evidence and they can clearly communicate those arguments in a variety of formats (using words, tables, graphs, mathematical equations, etc., as appropriate).

Related LEAP outcomes that are under review at Fitchburg State University:

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Integrative learning is an understanding and a disposition that a student builds across the curriculum and co-curriculum, from making simple connections among ideas and experiences to synthesizing and transferring learning to new, complex situations within and beyond the campus.

Problem solving is the process of designing, evaluating and implementing a strategy to answer an open-ended question or achieve a desired goal.

Ethical Reasoning

Students will recognize the ethical issues involved in human actions and be able to formulate a set of principles and virtues which can be brought to bear in personal and public decision making.

- Assessed with the Ethical Reasoning When Making Choices Rubric

Related LEAP outcomes that are assessed at Fitchburg State University:

Ethical Reasoning is reasoning about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas and consider the ramifications of alternative actions. Students' ethical self identity evolves as they practice ethical decision-making skills and learn how to describe and analyze positions on ethical issues.

Citizenship

Students will articulate the relationships among local, national and global concerns, interests and needs. They will recognize possibilities and opportunities to enact positive change on an individual or group level.

- Assessed with the Citizenship through Critical Analysis of Human Events Rubric

Related LEAP outcomes that are assessed at Fitchburg State University:

Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

Related LEAP outcomes that are under review at Fitchburg State University:

Intercultural Knowledge and Competence is a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.

Civic engagement is "working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes." (Excerpted from *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*)