

## **Full Report of the LA&S General Education and Assessment Institute Team**

The members of the LA&S Council who participated in the AAC&U General Education and Assessment Institute, Jane Fiske, Jenn Berg, Chris Cratsley, Elizabeth Gordon, David Svolba, and Kisha Tracy, have met through the summer to respond to the charge that was given them by the LA&S Council. The charge was shared with the campus community at the May 2016 Development Day and involved considering each of the following:

1. Introductory, intermediate, and advanced LA&S coursework that allows students to develop and be assessed longitudinally according to our learning outcomes.
2. A Liberal Arts and Sciences course approval, review and redesign process that ensures the associated learning outcomes will be taught and assessed for all students and provides an active role for the LA&S Council in overseeing these courses.
3. How to insure “A balanced regard for what are traditionally referred to as the arts and humanities, the sciences including mathematics, and the social sciences” (from NEASC Standard 4.17) and a role for the associated LA&S departments in offering these courses.
4. A curricular design that can be effectively explained and understood, both in terms of the learning goals and the course selection process through clear terminology (when possible adapted from existing terminology) as well as simple and meaningful choices for students.
5. Incentives or requirements for students to engage in focused coursework in a foreign language.
6. Incentives or requirements for students to engage in introductory and advanced coursework in a single discipline outside their major.
7. High Impact Practices and the institutional support to target improvement in one or more of the LA&S learning outcomes including:
  - a. Learning communities, team-taught courses, and/or other models to foster integrative, interdisciplinary learning.
  - b. A credit-bearing “First-Year Experience” that, alongside knowledge-based instruction might include the acquisition of cognitive, meta-cognitive, wellness and character-related skills.
  - c. Civic learning opportunities that foster civic knowledge and civic engagement.

The learning outcomes identified by the LA&S Council included those identified in the design and implementation of the existing program:

- Aesthetic Appreciation
- Citizenship (Including Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge)
- Communication (Oral and Written)
- Ethical Reasoning
- Problem Solving through Quantitative Literacy/Reasoning and Data Analysis/Scientific Reasoning.

The LA&S Council charged the team to further consider additional outcomes including:

- Metacognition (Life-long learning)
- Wellness (Physical and Mental)
- Critical and Creative Thinking (Including Critical Analysis and Logical Thinking)
- Information Literacy
- Reading
- Interdisciplinary and Integrative Learning
- Civic Learning and Engagement

In developing the proposal, the team has followed a “backward-design” model that begins with the learning goals and uses those to determine what would constitute evidence of these learning goals in the classroom, before finally determining what curricular design would achieve those learning goals. The following pages detail the team’s progress in completing the three steps of this process:

1. In response to the LA&S charge (4) for a design that can be effectively explained and understood, the team has attempted to reframe our existing LA&S goals along with the recommended additions in the context of the University Mission to provide an overall statement about undergraduate student learning that can be easily expressed to students and parents. This statement represents the first step in the backward-design process and is provided on the next page.
  - The team recognized that the campus lacks any clear statement about institution-wide undergraduate learning goals, and attempted to address that by adapting the learning goals from the LA&S charge, academic and strategic plan, and feedback from the campus community.
  - In the interest of communicating to a general audience, the team has grouped the learning goals into categories rather than just providing a long list. This grouping is strictly a communication tool and is not a proposal for LA&S clusters. The team recognizes that most of these goals span the different categories.
  - We have attempted to insure that these learning goals are broadly applicable across many disciplines, and have intentionally avoided creating goals representing only one or a few disciplines.
  
2. In response to the LA&S charges (1 and 2) for a design that can be assessed at an introductory, intermediate and advanced level, the team explored what evidence could demonstrate an acceptable level of proficiency for each learning goal, as well as a more advanced, aspirational level of proficiency. The team reviewed potential rubrics for assessing student work related to each learning goal as part of the process of writing these draft proficiencies. The tables on the following pages represent the second step in the backward-design process, referencing the student learning goals, potential rubrics, and proficiencies.
  
3. The team used the learning goals and proficiencies to explore potential curricular models. The last section of this report represents the third step in the backward-design process, initial proposals for LA&S curriculum changes to meet the learning goals and address the team’s charge. We will be holding forums and focus groups in the fall semester to get feedback on the learning goals, proficiencies and curricular models for ongoing revision by the LA&S council. The timeline for beginning the ongoing process of campus outreach is provided below:

DATE/TIME	EVENT
8/29	<b>Full report</b> shared with the campus community through LA&S council website
8/29	Full report discussed with chairs at Division chair retreats, initial planning for Departmental focus groups
9/1	Brief overview of Full Report on Development Day
9/8	Meeting on Full Report with 2015-2016 LA&S council members
9/13 – 3:30PM	<b>Open forum on Full Report</b> , LA&S program revision, and planning for LA&S program focus groups
9/14 –9AM and 3:30PM	<b>Additional Open Forums on Full Report</b> , LA&S program revision and planning for LA&S program focus groups
9/15	Meeting with Chairs to discuss feedback on LA&S program revision

**Throughout the fall there will be LA&S Council Meetings, departmental focus group meetings, and LA&S program focus group meetings.**

**University Mission:** Fitchburg State University is committed to excellence in teaching and learning and blends liberal arts and sciences and professional programs within a small college environment. Our comprehensive public university prepares students to lead, serve, and succeed by fostering lifelong learning and civic and global responsibility. A Fitchburg State education extends beyond our classrooms to include residential, professional, and co-curricular opportunities. As a community resource, we provide leadership and support for the economic, environmental, social, and cultural needs of North Central Massachusetts and the Commonwealth.

**Institutional Student Learning Goals:** Fitchburg State students will be critical and creative thinkers who integrate and communicate their learning from a variety of disciplines and experiences in ways that enhance their civic, personal and professional lives.

Students will exhibit **critical and creative thinking**. They will:

- Analyze various forms of artistic and literary works, understand the contexts from which they emerge and which they reflect, as well as articulate and defend their meanings and values.
- Recognize the ethical issues involved in human actions and formulate a set of principles and values that can be brought to bear in personal and public decision-making.
- Recognize what information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use that information effectively and ethically.
- Analyze and interpret mathematical information as a means to evaluate arguments and make informed choices.
- Engage with and answer questions about the natural, physical, and social world using scientific practices including analyzing and interpreting data.

Students will exhibit **interdisciplinary and integrative learning**, developing the skills for lifelong learning. They will:

- Integrate and apply knowledge from different disciplines and experiences to solve problems.
- Reflect on their learning, acquire new knowledge and skills in independent settings, and make and adhere to plans for future learning.

Students will demonstrate skills for effective **communication and collaboration**. They will:

- Speak, read, write, and listen to create and critically interpret meanings using a variety of media.
- Collaborate effectively with cooperation, empathy, flexibility, and inclusivity.

Students will demonstrate **personal, social and global responsibility** through wellness, intercultural knowledge and civic engagement. They will:

- Enhance personal wellness by applying knowledge and practical skills related to physical, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and occupational well-being.
- Identify and articulate the relationships among personal, local, national, and global concerns and needs.
- Recognize and engage in opportunities to enact positive social change on an individual or group level.

Potential Goals	Potential Language*	Potential rubrics	Potential Proficiencies	Potential Advanced Proficiencies
<p><b>Critical and Creative Thinking</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Aesthetic Analysis and Appreciation</b></li> <li><b>Ethical Reasoning</b></li> <li><b>Information Literacy</b></li> <li><b>Quantitative Reasoning</b></li> <li><b>Inquiry and Analysis</b></li> </ul>	Analyze various forms of artistic and literary works, understand the contexts from which they emerge and which they reflect, as well as articulate and defend their meanings and values.	Modified LA&S Aesthetic Appreciation and AAC&U Critical Thinking	Describes, explains and evaluates the sources of his or her own perspective on selected issues, contexts, or works in the arts and compares that perspective with other views.	Frames a controversy or problem within the arts, explores and evaluates competing perspectives on the controversy or problem, and presents a reasoned analysis of the issue that demonstrates critical consideration of the competing views. OR Constructs an original project, exhibition or performance expressing a personal vision and explains the context of this creative vision.
	Recognize the ethical issues involved in human actions and formulate a set of principles and values that can be brought to bear in personal and public decision-making.	LA&S Ethical Reasoning	Describes ethical issues in historical and contemporary problems and shows how ethical principles or frameworks help to inform judgments and decision making.	Identifies and elaborates key ethical issues, articulates the ways in which differing ethical perspectives influence judgments and decision-making, and develops and defends an approach to resolving these issues.
	Recognize what information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use that information effectively and ethically.	QC Dyad Information Literacy	Accesses, evaluates and deliberately chooses relevant sources through simple search strategies, identifies some assumptions and biases in these sources, and uses and cites information, accurately, legally and ethically.	Locates, evaluates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources with clarity and depth, analyzing own and others assumptions and biases, and follows a discipline-standard citation style.
	Analyze and interpret mathematical information as a means to evaluate arguments and make informed choices.	QC Dyad Quantitative Reasoning	Students interpret mathematical descriptions of situations and develop appropriate solution strategies, making effective choices and accurate calculations, and translating information into mathematical forms to draw conclusions from results, reflecting on their assumptions.	Identifies and mathematically models essential features of a complex problem or situation, creating and exploring examples, devising and testing conjectures, assessing the correctness of solutions, and communicating with consistent, precise language to make rigorous arguments and draw conclusions.
	Engage with and answer questions about the natural, physical, and social world using scientific practices including analyzing and interpreting data.	LA&S Problem Solving through Inquiry and Analysis	Describes a research question and proposes an investigative strategy, graphically presents and accurately describes scientific results, and uses quantitative evidence to support conclusions.	Frames a research question and conducts an investigation using appropriate methods, synthesizes own results with evidence from outside sources to identify patterns in and draw qualified conclusions from the data, and describes implications of results.

Potential Goals	Potential Language	Potential rubrics	Potential Proficiencies	Potential Advanced Proficiencies
<b>Interdisciplinary and Integrative Learning</b>  - <b>Integrative Learning</b>  - <b>Lifelong Learning</b>	Integrate and apply knowledge from different disciplines and experiences to solve problems.	AAC&U Integrative Learning	Describes and evaluates the ways in which at least two fields of study define, address, and interpret the importance for society of a problem in science, the arts, society, human services, economic life or technology.	Describes and evaluates the ways in which at least two fields of study define, address, and interpret a problem in science, the arts, society, human services, economic life or technology, explains how the methods of inquiry in these fields address the problem, and proposes an approach to the problem that draws on these fields.
	Reflect on their learning, acquire new knowledge and skills in independent settings, and make and adhere to plans for future learning.	AAC&U Lifelong Learning	Implements a plan to locate, gather and organize evidence regarding a question in an experiential setting outside of formal academic study, and reflects on the process of building on their prior learning.	Plans for and completes a substantial project that evaluates a significant question, offers alternative approaches to answering it, and generates an analytic narrative of the effects of prior and new learning both inside and outside the classroom on the research or practical skills employed in executing the plan.

Potential Goals	Potential Language	Potential rubrics	Potential Proficiencies	Potential Advanced Proficiencies
<b>Communication</b> - <b>Reading</b>  - <b>Speaking and Listening</b>  - <b>Writing</b>  - <b>Collaboration</b>	Speak, read, write and listen to create and critically interpret meanings using a variety of media.	AAC&U Reading	Conducts an inquiry that requires interpreting the relationship among textual features in at least two different texts and displaying an understanding of the contribution of purpose and genre conventions to the meaning from each.	Engages with a broad range of texts in the context of scholarship to develop a foundation of disciplinary knowledge and to raise and explore important questions.
		LA&S Oral Communication	Communicates effectively to general audiences through structured oral presentations.	Constructs sustained, coherent arguments, narratives or explications of issues, problems or technical issues and processes, in oral presentations to general and specific audiences.
		QC Dyad Written Communication	Develops and refines cogent, coherent, and substantially error-free writing for communication to general audiences.	Demonstrates a process-oriented formal writing style, fluently integrating discipline-specific terminology and supporting an original and clearly focused thesis.
	Collaborate effectively with cooperation, empathy, flexibility, and inclusivity.	AAC&U Teamwork	Reflect on how to participate in and/or lead groups highlighting the role of cooperation, empathy, flexibility and inclusivity.	Negotiates a strategy for group work, facilitating a constructive team climate and positive conflict resolution, implement the strategy and communicates the process and the results.

Potential Goals	Potential Language	Potential rubrics	Potential Proficiencies	Potential Advanced Proficiencies
<b>Personal, Social and Global Responsibility</b> - <b>Personal Wellness</b>	Enhance personal wellness by applying knowledge and practical skills related to physical, social, intellectual, emotional, spiritual and occupational well-being.	?	Identifies the multidimensional factors related to wellness and develops plans to enhance overall health and well-being.	Identifies the multidimensional factors related to wellness, explains the underlying mechanisms including physiological and neurological, by which wellness factors improve health, and develops plans to enhance overall health and well-being.
- <b>Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge</b>	Identify and articulate the relationships among personal, local, national, and global concerns and needs.	AAC&U Intercultural Knowledge	Explains how knowledge from different historical and contemporary cultural perspectives might affect interpretations of prominent problems in politics, society, the arts and/or global relations.	Explains diverse positions, including those of different cultural, economic and geographic interests, on a contested contemporary or historical public issue, and evaluates the issue in light of both those interests and evidence drawn from journalism and scholarship, potentially in a second language.
- <b>Civic Knowledge and Engagement</b>	Recognize and engage in opportunities to enact positive social change on an individual or group level.	QC Dyad Civic Engagement	Describes diverse positions, historical and contemporary, on selected democratic values or practices, and presents his or her own position on a specific problem where one or more of these values or practices are involved.	Collaborates with others in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and, where applicable, describes the result.

\* Whenever possible, potential language to describe a learning goal was adapted from the 5 existing LA&S objectives. **LA&S rubrics** were developed to assess these objectives by the Liberal Arts and Sciences council, and were inspired in part by the AAC&U rubrics. **QC Dyad rubrics** were developed by teams of Fitchburg State University and Mount Wachusett Community College faculty as part of AAC&U Quality Collaboratives Dyad grant and were also informed by the AAC&U rubrics. **AAC&U rubrics** were developed by faculty members from across the country as part of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) project. All of these rubrics are available on the **LA&S council website**.

## Initial LA&S Curriculum Proposal

This proposal for changes to the LA&S curriculum was informed by a variety of ongoing efforts on the campus. The proposed changes respond to areas of emphasis from the 2007 LA&S revision that were proposed but never fully realized (including learning communities and freshmen seminars), and initiatives within the most recent Academic Plan to increase emphasis on reading, writing, critical analysis and logical thinking, and information literacy. The proposal also incorporates the 2015 Strategic Plan Actions to align the LA&S curriculum with skills such as metacognition, critical and creative thinking, oral and written communication, ethical reasoning, social justice and cross-disciplinary experience; to support appropriate high-impact learning experiences, including opportunities in academic and experiential settings, to develop multicultural competencies, a freshman year experience, and a capstone experience; and to support educational initiatives that extend and apply civic learning. Members of the LA&S Council who developed this proposal were also active participants in the 2015-2016 working groups focused on Civic Learning, Interdisciplinary Learning, and Reimagining the First Year, and drew inspiration from the work and feedback of these teams. Finally, this proposal was informed by feedback from the campus community through Development Day forums and discussions of the LA&S Council on the plans for change outlined in the LA&S self-study. Those plans involved reviewing and revising the learning goals and insuring the curriculum allows students to develop related learning outcomes across their LA&S courses. Suggestions for accomplishing these goals included developing a LA&S capstone, creating a first year experience with learning communities, encouraging minors, and enhancing language study by integrating language coursework where possible into each of these interdisciplinary elements of the curriculum. In response to this feedback, the proposal represents a balance between “revision” and “revolution” retaining what faculty indicated they valued in the existing LA&S Curriculum, while proposing both revisions and innovations intended to improve the curriculum.

To insure that the LA&S program represents a true “curriculum” through which students progress, rather than a disconnected collection of courses, the proposal divides the coursework up into 4 levels:

1. **First Year Experience:** Courses required in the first year of the program providing a foundation for developing the learning goals.
2. **Freshman and Sophomore Courses:** Courses that also provide a foundation for developing the learning goals but are not required to be completed in the first year. Programs would be encouraged to put these early in their Four Year Plans of Study.
3. **Sophomore and Junior Courses:** Courses that build on some of the learning goals developed in the First Year Experience and Freshman and Sophomore courses. While students might sometimes take these courses during the freshman year if they have completed the more foundational coursework, programs would be encouraged to put these later in their Four Year Plans of Study.
4. **LA&S Capstone Courses and Minor and Major Requirements:** Programs would be encouraged to put the LA&S Capstone course within the Junior or Senior year of their Four Year Plans of Study and to help advise students into an appropriate minor that they would complete in place of Option A, B or C in the old LA&S curriculum. As in the past, programs will be required to identify advanced coursework related to speaking, listening, and writing skills, and would be encouraged to include this coursework towards the end of their Four Year Plans of Study.

As students develop their proficiencies related to the LA&S Learning Goals across these 4 levels, it is hoped they will move from the Potential Proficiencies towards the Potential Advanced Proficiencies provided in the tables above. However, these Proficiencies are aspirational, representing a way to communicate what we might be asking of the students in our courses rather than what they all would be able to fully demonstrate. We anticipate a process whereby faculty developing or refining courses that address a particular goal and related proficiencies will work together to adapt the proficiency language, related rubrics and course assignments to insure that they are supporting students in developing these proficiencies. We list potential proficiencies with each course in the curriculum below to begin what we anticipate will be an ongoing dialog about these proficiencies both in the process of creating the final LA&S proposal and in developing and refining courses for the LA&S Curriculum.

### **First Year Experience (12 credits):**

In an effort to intentionally craft a curriculum that establishes both the academic and dispositional skills required for future success at our institution we've identified four courses that students will be required to take in their first year: a **first-year seminar**, **Writing I and II**, and **College Math Requirement**. The need to clearly identify, strengthen, and improve students' core competencies in reading, writing, information literacy, critical and creative thinking, and quantitative reasoning has been a perennial concern of our institution (highlighted in a specific projection from the 2012 NEASC self-study and incorporated into the Academic Plan). Similarly, the strategic planning process reflected faculty desire to include integrative/interdisciplinary learning and strengthen oral communication (both listening and speaking and collaboration) and metacognition (expressed as a life-long learning skill that involves reflection on ways to improve related executive function processes). We recognized the opportunity to build on quantitative reasoning, speaking and listening, writing and information literacy goals through our existing first year math and Writing I and II courses, as well as the need to integrate the other foundational learning goals into a new credit-bearing first year seminar that was already proposed in the strategic plan to support student success.

### **First Year Seminar and Learning Community:**

Within the first year students will be required to take a course that will introduce and enhance academic skills and dispositions foundational to collegiate academic pursuits. This course will be intentionally linked in a learning community to one or more other courses in the general education curriculum to deepen the integrative learning aspect. In addition to Integrative Learning, we propose that the first year seminar and associated learning community course(s) address college level reading skills, executive function and metacognition skills (which we define as Life-long learning skills related to organization, planning and reflection within the learning process), and the social skills to collaborate effectively in a group setting. Critical and creative thinking takes many forms as students advance through the LA&S curriculum, including thinking critically and creatively about aesthetics (aesthetic analysis and appreciation), ethics (ethical reasoning), information sources and authority (information literacy), mathematical concepts and quantities (quantitative reasoning), and using evidence for inductive and deductive inference (inquiry and analysis). Therefore, we propose that the course provide a foundation in critical and creative thinking that can support the related goals of thinking critically and creatively in these various contexts. We propose exploring the existing Critical and Creative Thinking course as a model for how to develop some of these skills, while also proposing that there should be multiple versions of the course that address different areas of student Academic Interests and Motivations (AIMs). AIMs related to Health Sciences, Natural and Physical Sciences, and Computer and Technical Sciences have already been identified as part of an effort to better advise pre-majors with science interests, and the development of others is planned as part of Reimagining the First Year. The LA&S Council will convene a working group with broad departmental representation to develop potential first year seminars and associated learning community courses, as well as a shared set of learning outcomes that may include other goals, but addresses critical and creative thinking as well as the following:

#### **Reading**

Conducts an inquiry that requires interpreting the relationship among textual features in at least two different texts and displaying an understanding of the contribution of purpose and genre conventions to the meaning from each.

#### **Integrative Learning**

Describes and evaluates the ways in which at least two fields of study define, address, and interpret the importance for society of a problem in science, the arts, society, human services, economic life or technology.

#### **Life-long Learning**

Implements a plan to locate, gather and organize evidence regarding a question in an experiential setting outside of formal academic study, and reflects on the process of building on their prior learning.

#### **Collaboration**

Reflect on how to participate in and/or lead groups highlighting the role of cooperation, empathy, flexibility and inclusivity.

**Writing I:**

As part of the English Studies programs' first year writing goals of "providing comprehension of (1) rhetoric, (2) argumentation, (3) uses of evidence, (4) process oriented writing and (5) academic community" we feel that Writing I can address the foundational writing and oral communication aspects of our communication goal. The LA&S Council will work with the English Studies program to explore how Writing I can supports foundational skills for written and oral communication in ways that can be built on through subsequent coursework.

Communication

Speak, read, write and listen to create and critically interpret meanings using a variety of media

**Writing II:**

Building on skills established in Writing I, students in Writing II will continue to develop skills in written communication and the foundational aspect of information literacy. While these outcomes are already part of the Fitchburg State University first year writing goals and objectives as outlined by the English Studies department, the LA&S Council will work with the department to establish how student learning should be taught and assessed for these goals both in this course and subsequent writing intensive courses within the curriculum.

Writing

Develops and refines cogent, coherent, and substantially error-free writing for communication to general audiences.

Information Literacy

Accesses, evaluates and deliberately chooses relevant sources through simple search strategies, identifies some assumptions and biases in these sources, and uses and cites information, accurately, legally and ethically.

**Math Requirement:**

Quantitative reasoning in general, and mathematical preparation for courses required in the major, has already been identified by the community as properly placed early in a student's time at FSU. Building on this, the LA&S Council will work with the Mathematics Department to clearly articulate how the Quantitative Reasoning proficiency can be expressed in first-year College math courses.

Quantitative Reasoning

Students interpret mathematical descriptions of situations and develop appropriate solution strategies, making effective choices and accurate calculations, and translating information into mathematical forms to draw conclusions from results, reflecting on their assumptions.

### **Freshman and Sophomore Courses (12 credits):**

The LA&S Self-Study determined that our existing clusters do not always represent sets of courses with similar learning goals. For example, Psychological Sciences courses were judged to be misplaced in the Citizenship and the World (CTW) cluster, and the Health and Fitness requirement does not share learning goals with other courses in the Science, Math and Technology (SMT) cluster. Furthermore, our Ethical Reasoning goal was not consistently represented in any of the clusters. Finally, discussions within the LA&S Council have suggested for some time that the goal and definition of the Global Diversity requirement is unclear and not necessarily met by all courses with that designation. We have proposed a new set of 4 types of LA&S courses to address goals related to Aesthetic Analysis and Appreciation, Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge, Personal Wellness, and Ethical Reasoning. We propose that students should take these courses in **Arts, Culture and Expression (ACE), Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge (GLI), Wellness, and Ethical Reasoning** in either their freshman or sophomore year so these courses can provide foundational skills in the related learning goals. Placing these courses early in the curriculum also provides early exposure to the content and modes of inquiry in these potentially unfamiliar fields as these are likely to be in disciplines students had little exposure to in High School, such as Art, Music, Languages, Sociology, Economics, Political Science, Exercise and Sports Science, Psychological Sciences, and Philosophy. The LA&S Council will work with the Humanities, Behavioral Sciences, Economics, History and Political Science Departments and the Division of Health and Natural Sciences to determine how best to identify appropriate courses that meet the associated learning goals.

### **Arts, Culture and Expression (ACE) Course:**

Exposing students to artistic work and engaging students in considering the cultural origins and implications of such works is an integral component of a liberal arts education. We recommend that students take this course early, either in the first or second year, given the many possible connections between this **Aesthetic Analysis and Appreciation** course and others included in the curriculum (literature or history for example). We would encourage faculty to explore options of linking their courses in a Learning Community with the First Year Seminar and potentially other courses to deepen students' engagement in integrative or interdisciplinary learning or **global learning and intercultural knowledge**. Even when taken independently of a learning community, some, but possibly not all of these courses may also address global learning and intercultural knowledge. The proposed shift from a global diversity requirement to a more explicit goal and related proficiencies for global learning and intercultural knowledge provides an opportunity to reimagine the types of courses that could meet both this goal and the Aesthetic Analysis and Appreciation goal. The working group imagined that some language courses could address student learning in these goals (or that such courses could be developed). Further conversations with the Humanities department would clarify how best to do this in a way that would encourage more students to pursue language study.

### **Aesthetic Analysis and Appreciation:**

Describes, explains and evaluates the sources of his or her own perspective on selected issues, contexts, or works in the arts and compares that perspective with other views

### **Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge**

Explains how knowledge from different historical and contemporary cultural perspectives might affect interpretations of prominent problems in politics, society, the arts and/or global relations.

### **Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge (GLI) Course:**

Engaging students with learning about how individuals interact within and between groups at a local and global level is central to laying a foundation for students' development in the goal of **Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge**. These courses may also in many cases support the **Civic Knowledge and Engagement** goal and language courses that meet at least the first of these goals and can provide an opportunity to encourage language study. We recommend that students take this course early (in the first or second year) to lay the foundational proficiency with this learning goal. Conversations with the Humanities, Behavioral Sciences, and Economics, History, and Political Sciences departments will help clarify how these courses should fit into students' curricula and meet the learning goals.

#### Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge

Explains how knowledge from different historical and contemporary cultural perspectives might affect interpretations of prominent problems in politics, society, the arts and/or global relations.

#### Civic Knowledge and Engagement

Describes diverse positions, historical and contemporary, on selected democratic values or practices, and presents his or her own position on a specific problem where one or more of these values or practices are involved.

### **Wellness Course:**

The Exercise Sports Sciences Department reached out to the LA&S Council in the Spring of 2016 to suggest replacing Health and Fitness with a more broadly defined group of wellness courses that could be offered by a variety of departments. Members of the department collaborated with this working group to define a learning goal that involves understandings and skills related to their own wellness. Moving away from a single course to meet these needs for all students, we encourage departments in the Health and Natural Sciences division and other interested departments to work with the LA&S council to define the key elements of a wellness course and develop these courses that focus on the **Personal Wellness** goal.

#### Personal Wellness:

Identifies the multidimensional factors related to wellness and develops plans to enhance overall health and well-being.

### **Ethical Reasoning Course:**

One of the issues raised in the LAS program review is that while we offer courses that engage students in developing **Ethical Reasoning** our current curriculum does not require students to take courses that develop this goal. To address this deficiency we propose an Ethical Reasoning course requirement. Those programs that have a discipline-specific course that addresses this goal could continue to use the existing course to meet this requirement (and some may develop new courses to meet this need). The team would note that this type of course has natural ties to other goals and we recommend exploring opportunities for linked or interdisciplinary courses that relate learning in this area to one of the other goals listed above.

#### Ethical Reasoning:

Describes ethical issues in historical and contemporary problems and shows how ethical principles or frameworks help to inform judgments and decision-making.

### Sophomore and Junior Courses (9 credits):

One of the weaknesses identified in our existing LA&S curriculum is that unlike most curricula, there are no opportunities for students to intentionally progress in their skills as they progress through the curriculum, given that most of the LA&S courses are offered at an introductory level. In order to address this weakness, we have identified 3 groups of courses that can build on at least some of the learning goals introduced in the freshmen and sophomore courses. In addition, both NEASC standards, feedback from Development Days and the charge from the LA&S council suggested the curriculum should insure “A balanced regard for what are traditionally referred to as the arts and humanities, the sciences including mathematics, and the social sciences” (from NEASC Standard 4.17) and a role for the associated LA&S departments in offering these courses. The freshmen and sophomore courses maintain this balance, and it is reflected at the level of these sophomore and junior courses by requiring one course with the **History** designation, one **Literature** course and one **Science** course. By placing these courses after students complete Writing I and II, and the First Year Experience they all have the opportunity to begin to address more advanced proficiencies in areas such as Reading, Speaking and Listening, Writing, and Information Literacy, while recognizing not all courses will address all these goals. In addition to planned open forums, the LA&S Council will work with the Economics, History and Political Science and English Studies departments as well as the Division of Health and Natural Sciences to explore how the relevant learning goals would be taught and assessed in each of these kinds of courses.

#### Reading

Engages with a broad range of texts in the context of scholarship to develop a foundation of disciplinary knowledge and to raise and explore important questions.

#### Speaking and Listening

Constructs sustained, coherent arguments, narratives or explications of issues, problems or technical issues and processes, in oral presentations to general and specific audiences.

#### Writing

Demonstrates a process-oriented formal writing style, fluently integrating discipline-specific terminology and supporting an original and clearly focused thesis

#### Information Literacy

Locates, evaluates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources with clarity and depth, analyzing own and others assumptions and biases, and follows a discipline-standard citation style.

### **History Course:**

While a student’s History course can be taken at any point in the current LA&S curriculum, we are recommending in the new curriculum that students outside a History major have the opportunity to develop foundational skills in their freshman year prior to engaging in their history coursework. In this way History courses can be designed not only to begin to develop **one or more** of the advanced proficiencies described above, but they can also serve to build on the **Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge** proficiency introduced in the Arts, Culture, and Expression, and Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge courses, while providing a firm foundation in the **Civic Knowledge and Engagement** proficiency. The LA&S Council will work with the Economics, History and Political Science department to determine how the related proficiencies will be expressed in these History courses.

#### Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge

Explains diverse positions, including those of different cultural, economic and geographic interests, on a contested contemporary or historical public issue, and evaluates the issue in light of both those interests and evidence drawn from journalism and scholarship, potentially in a second language.

#### Civic Knowledge and Engagement

Describes diverse positions, historical and contemporary, on selected democratic values or practices, and presents his or her own position on a specific problem where one or more of these values or practices are involved

### **Literature Course:**

The LA&S Curriculum is already structured so that students outside of the English Studies major generally do not take a Literature course until after completing Writing I and II in their freshman year. By continuing this policy and adding the freshmen seminar in the first year, Literature courses can be designed to begin to develop **one or more** of the advanced proficiencies described above for Reading, Speaking and Listening, Writing and Information Literacy, and can also serve to build on the **Aesthetic Analysis and Appreciation** goal introduced in the Humanities course. The LA&S Council will work with the English Studies program to determine how the proficiency related to this goal will be taught and assessed in Literature courses.

#### Aesthetic Analysis and Appreciation

Frames a controversy or problem within the arts, explores and evaluates competing perspectives on the controversy or problem, and presents a reasoned analysis of the issue that demonstrates critical consideration of the competing views. OR Constructs an original project, exhibition or performance expressing a personal vision and explains the context of this creative vision.

### **Science Course:**

Increasingly faculty have found the need to add mathematics pre-requisites or co-requisites to science courses to insure students have the needed Quantitative Reasoning skills to succeed in their science coursework. We are recommending that students outside of Science majors take at least one Science course after completing the First Year Experience of Freshman Seminar, Writing I, Writing II and their College Math requirement. In this way Science courses can be designed not only to begin to develop **one or more** of the advanced proficiencies for Reading, Speaking and Listening, Writing, and Information Literacy described above, but they can also serve to build on the **Quantitative Reasoning** proficiency introduced in the College Math course, while providing a firm foundation in the **Inquiry and Analysis** proficiency. The LA&S Council will work with the Division of Health and Natural Sciences faculty to establish how these proficiencies will be taught and assessed in Science Courses.

#### Quantitative Reasoning

Identifies and mathematically models essential features of a complex problem or situation, creating and exploring examples, devising and testing conjectures, assessing the correctness of solutions, and communicating with consistent, precise language to make rigorous arguments and draw conclusions.

#### Inquiry and Analysis

Describes a research question and proposes an investigative strategy, graphically presents and accurately describes scientific results, and uses quantitative evidence to support conclusions.

### LA&S Capstone Courses and Minor and Major Requirements:

**(Credits will vary depending on the Minor selected, whether LA&S courses taken for freshmen, sophomore and junior requirements are part of the minor, and whether the Major requirements are met within the major or by courses outside the major)**

One of the struggles we encountered in trying to develop a curriculum with a strong breadth of learning goals and a limited number of credits (33 in the courses described above)--was that there were not enough courses to insure that students would have the opportunity to move towards Potential Advanced Proficiency for all of the learning goals, while preserving student choice. In the existing LA&S, options A, B and C are intended to provide students with the opportunity to develop more advanced skills through advanced LA&S coursework outside their major, while the Speaking and Listening and Junior/Senior Writing requirements within the major are intended to strengthen student skills in these areas without additional LA&S requirements. To address both choice and advanced coursework, we propose students choose 1 faculty-developed interdisciplinary **LA&S Capstone Course** from a range of possibilities, select a **Minor** in place of options A,B, or C, and that each program continue to specify **Major requirements for advanced Speaking, Listening and Writing.**

### LA&S Capstone Courses:

The concept of the LA&S Capstone Course emerged from the LA&S self-study, ongoing discussions of ways to insure students could progress to more advanced levels in as many of the learning goals as possible, efforts to integrate more high impact practices into the LA&S Curriculum, and inspiring models from other institutions. Given that the overarching mission of the LA&S program involves helping to develop “critical and creative thinkers who integrate and communicate their learning from a variety of disciplines and experiences in ways that enhance their civic, personal and professional lives,” it is essential that we create courses in which students are challenged to do just that. These LA&S Capstone courses will focus on experiential learning as students engage with “Wicked Problems” in the world; they will collaborate in teams to address these problems, drawing on readings and insights from multiple disciplines, planning how to address these problems and reflecting on the success of their approaches. As a result, students in these courses will be expected to demonstrate more advanced proficiencies in the areas of **Integrative Learning, Life-long Learning, Reading, and Collaboration**, skills initially emphasized in their First Year Seminar. The LA&S Council, in collaboration with the Interdisciplinary Learning and Civic Learning working groups, will convene forums to help establish clear requirements and definitions for LA&S Capstone courses, including how these LA&S goals should be taught and assessed in these courses.

#### Integrative Learning

Describes and evaluates the ways in which at least two fields of study define, address, and interpret a problem in science, the arts, society, human services, economic life or technology, explains how the methods of inquiry in these fields address the problem, and proposes an approach to the problem that draws on these fields.

#### Life-long Learning

Plans for and completes a substantial project that evaluates a significant question, offers alternative approaches to answering it, and generates an analytic narrative of the effects of prior and new learning both inside and outside the classroom on the research or practical skills employed in executing the plan.

#### Reading

Engages with a broad range of texts in the context of scholarship to develop a foundation of disciplinary knowledge and to raise and explore important questions.

#### Collaboration

Negotiates a strategy for group work, facilitating a constructive team climate and positive conflict resolution, implement the strategy and communicates the process and the results.

In addition to the 4 learning goals described above, we propose that LA&S Capstone courses address one of 4 themes related to additional learning goals: **Community and Civic Engagement**, **World Issues and Ethics**, **Research and Inquiry**, and **Health and Wellness**. While other themes could be developed, the important concept behind having themes is that they provide opportunities for faculty and staff to work together developing shared approaches to connecting student work within the Capstone to experiences and opportunities outside the classroom.

### **Community and Civic Engagement Theme**

This theme provides students with opportunities to advance relative to the goal of **Civic Knowledge and Engagement**, and the connections outside the classroom are inherent in the design of these courses as teams of students must engage in Service Learning projects within the local community.

#### Civic Knowledge and Engagement

Collaborates with others in developing and implementing an approach to a civic issue, evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and, where applicable, describes the result.

### **World Issues and Ethics Theme**

This theme is intended to advance student learning in the area of **Ethical Reasoning**. Opportunities to connect beyond the classroom could include campus forums, debates, moot courts, or model UN experiences in which students address the World Issues from their courses. Study Abroad courses might also be created as part of the World Issues and Ethics Theme.

#### Ethical Reasoning

Identifies and elaborates key ethical issues, articulates the ways in which differing ethical perspectives influence judgments and decision-making, and develops and defends an approach to resolving these issues.

### **Research and Inquiry Theme**

This theme advances student learning in **Inquiry and Analysis**. Teams of students taking courses within this theme could be required to present posters at the Undergraduate Conference on Research and Creative Practice.

#### Inquiry and Analysis

Frames a research question and conducts an investigation using appropriate methods, synthesizes own results with evidence from outside sources to identify patterns in and draw qualified conclusions from the data, and describes implications of results.

### **Health and Wellness Theme**

This theme provides courses that advance student learning relative to the **Personal Wellness** goal. Students in these courses could develop wellness-related projects on the campus or in the local community.

#### Personal Wellness

Identifies the multidimensional factors related to wellness, explains the underlying mechanisms including physiological and neurological, by which wellness factors improve health, and develops plans to enhance overall health and well-being.

### **Minor Requirement:**

In the current LA&S, Options A, B and C were designed to provide more advanced, focused coursework in LA&S disciplines that would allow students to better learn from and appreciate these disciplines in a way one or two courses alone could not. However, option B was also intended to encourage minors, while Option A was intended to encourage foreign language study. The LA&S Self-Study found no increase in foreign language study since the LA&S revision, and Option A remains the least selected option. In addition, while option B is the most frequently selected option, and enrollment in minors has increased, there has been a recent trend towards increasing selection of option C which would not encourage minors or lead to increased language study. We propose to strengthen students' potential for interdisciplinary learning at a more advanced level by requiring that all students complete a minor (or second major) as part of their LA&S curriculum. Students in professional programs would be required to complete the minor in a LA&S discipline, while LA&S majors could complete the minor in a professional discipline. Although this approach no longer directly addresses languages in the manner of Option A, it may in fact encourage more language study as increasingly the University is adopting and considering interdisciplinary minors that incorporate language study; for students testing out of introductory language coursework, we propose they can benefit by continuing language study and completing a language minor with a reduced number of total credits. The LA&S council will work with departments to explore opportunities for new or revised minors that insure this requirement is not an undue burden on students but instead helps them graduate with an interdisciplinary education. While Minors generally require 6 more credits than the 12 credits in options A, B, and C, we also anticipate that in most cases at least one of the freshman, sophomore or junior LA&S course requirements can also be counted towards the minor, and by structuring the LA&S Capstone courses as interdisciplinary courses, these are also more likely to be able to count towards a student's minor and/or major as well.

### **Major Requirements:**

The LA&S program review noted that there was little effort to insure any continuity across the many Computer Literacy, Speaking and Listening and Junior/Senior Writing requirements of different programs. Concerns about the Computer Literacy requirement were also raised by the Technology subcommittee during the Strategic Planning process and an alternative approach was proposed involving an online module requirement that students would complete before they take an online course. This was expressed in the Strategic plan in terms of a proposed "regularly-assessed digital literacy standard for our students to ensure all students are prepared for the present learning environment." Therefore, we are proposing an end to the Computer Literacy requirement. However, fact that programs have identified courses that serve the Speaking and Listening and Writing goals of the curriculum represents an opportunity to insure that students develop more advanced proficiency in these areas without requiring too many credits within the LA&S curriculum. We propose that programs continue to identify courses that support the learning goals of **Speaking and Listening** and **Writing**, and that one or both of these courses also involve a heavy emphasis on the goal of **Information Literacy**.

#### Speaking and Listening

Constructs sustained, coherent arguments, narratives or explications of issues, problems or technical issues and processes, in oral presentations to general and specific audiences.

#### Writing

Demonstrates a process-oriented formal writing style, fluently integrating discipline-specific terminology  
Locates, evaluates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources with clarity and depth, analyzing own and others assumptions and biases, and follows a discipline-standard citation style and supporting an original and clearly focused thesis.

#### Information Literacy

Locates, evaluates, organizes and synthesizes information from sources with clarity and depth, analyzing own and others assumptions and biases, and follows a discipline-standard citation style.

The team will work with Departments to help them identify ways to select or modify courses that address these goals. With regard to fostering writing skills we also recommend adopting standards for Program-Specific Writing Intensive courses using a definition developed by the Interdisciplinary Learning Working Group. This definition of a Writing Intensive course is provided below and is subject to revision by LA&S sponsored focus groups involved in exploring the content of both Writing and Speaking and Listening courses required as part of a major. Consider the following draft definition.

At Fitchburg State University a course will be considered Writing Intensive/Attentive if it meets the following requirements:

- Course goals and/or objectives that include improving student writing.
- Multiple graded writing assignments (at least 3 including graded revisions), along with additional informal writing assignments providing a cumulative total page count of at least 15 (both submitted revisions and informal assignments beyond the 3 count towards that total, but essay questions on a timed final exam do not).
- A written prompt for each graded writing assignment, describing its purpose, including the skills and knowledge students will be demonstrating, the writing task, including audience and discipline-specific requirements (for example: documentation style), and the criteria for a successful paper.
- Classroom support for the writing process, including at least two of the following:
  - Opportunities to discuss the assignment, not only when it is distributed, but throughout the process.
  - One-on-one conferences
  - A peer review process
  - Discussion of samples of student writing
  - Sessions on information literacy and library resources
  - Any other classroom techniques to support the writing process
- Timely, meaningful, written or oral feedback on graded writing assignments, with grades for these assignments contributing substantially to the final course grade.

### **Curriculum Summary:**

Overall the proposed curriculum attempts to maintain approximately the same number of credits that are required in the existing LA&S curriculum. By proposing a new First Year Seminar and Learning Community and new LA&S Capstone, we hope to spur the creation of engaging new courses at the beginning and towards the end of students' college careers that involve them in interdisciplinary experiences and develop skills for Life-long learning. Revisions to existing clusters insure students get Arts, Global and Intercultural, Wellness and Ethics experiences in disciplines such as Art, Music, Languages, Economics, Political Science, Sociology, Exercise and Sports Science, Psychological Sciences, and Philosophy. Retaining History, Literature and Science requirements, while insuring they are taken after foundational courses, allows them to build on prior learning. Rather than having students simply revisit these more familiar disciplines in similar ways to High School, we hope placing them after foundational coursework allows these courses to be taught in more challenging and engaging ways. Finally, regardless of which of the many disciplines students choose as a minor, we propose that this requirement will allow students to graduate with the benefits of more developed insights from two different disciplines, and plan thoughtfully with their advisors to select an LA&S program of study that supports their learning goals.

## **Proposed Courses and Credits**

### **First Year Experience – 12 credits**

First Year Seminar and Learning Community -3 credit course linked with 1 or more other courses in the major or LA&S  
Writing I – 3 credits  
Writing II – 3 credits  
Math requirement – 3 credits

### **Freshman and Sophomore courses – 12 credits**

Arts, Culture and Expression course – 3 credits  
Global Learning and Intercultural Knowledge course – 3 credits  
Wellness course – 3 credits  
Ethical Reasoning course – 3 credits

### **Sophomore and Junior courses -9 credits**

History course – 3 credits  
Literature course – 3 credits  
Science course – 3 credits

### **LA&S Capstone Courses and Minor and Major Requirements – at least 15 credits**

LA&S Capstone course – 3 credits  
Minor – 12 or more credits (6 of the 18 credits required for most minors may be satisfied by other LA&S coursework)  
Major requirements – as defined by major (keeping Speaking and Listening and Junior/Senior Writing, dropping Computer Literacy)

### **Total Credits – 48 minimum**