

Summary of Appendices to LA&S Self Study

Appendix 1: 2000-2001 ACC Proposal 13 Revising LAS Requirements

- Proposed competency-based option for English, Math and Computer Literacy
- Limited LAS curriculum to 48 semester hours
- Proposed 2 courses each in aesthetic, logical, symbolic, experimental, and historical/traditional clusters and 1 course in leadership
- Was sent back for further review by the ACC

Appendix 2: LA&S Study Group Summer 2001

- Existing LA&S goals were too complex and confusing
- No one is certain what is being taught and how
- College should review other “cutting edge” programs
- Should use campus-wide committee and survey to assess strengths and weaknesses

Appendix 3: 2005-2006 ACC Proposal 32 Revision of the LA&S Curriculum

- Proposed departments should meet DHE mandated computer science and speaking and listening requirements.
- Established **Problem Solving and Synthesizing, Communication, Citizenship, Ethical Reasoning, and Arts (Aesthetic Appreciation)** objectives.
- Limited the LA&S curriculum to 48 hours -4 SMT courses, 3 CTW, 5 Arts, 4 option A, B or C, and double dipping to satisfy 2 International Perspectives courses.
- Proposed review of options A, B and C every 3 years which did not occur
- Proposed team-taught freshmen learning communities which did not occur

Appendix 4: Comparing Fitchburg State University LA&S outcomes to AAC&U LEAP outcomes

- **Aesthetic (Arts) Appreciation** has no corresponding LEAP outcome or VALUE rubric
- **Communication** has 4 corresponding LEAP outcomes and rubrics: We try to assess, **Written and Oral Communication**, we don't assess **Reading** and **Teamwork**.
- **Problem Solving** has 5 corresponding LEAP outcomes and rubrics: We assess **Inquiry** and **Quantitative Literacy**, not **Integrative Learning** or **Problem Solving**.
- **Ethical Reasoning** has a single LEAP outcome and rubric also called **Ethical Reasoning**
- **Citizenship** has 3 corresponding LEAP outcomes and rubrics: We assess **Critical Thinking** about citizenship, not **Intercultural Knowledge and Competence** or **Civic Engagement**.

Appendix 5: Bibliography of Recent Publications authored or referenced by LA&S council

- LA&S council members have published on Assessing **Quantitative Reasoning**
- LA&S council members have published on Assessing **Civic Learning**
- LA&S council members have published on Teaching and Assessing **Information Literacy**
- LA&S council members have published on Assessing **Written Communication**

Appendix 6: LEAP High Impact Educational Practices and Principles of Excellence

- High Impact Practices include: **First Year Seminars** and Experiences, Common Intellectual Experiences (**Common Core**), **Learning Communities**, **Writing-Intensive Courses**, **Collaborative Assignments** and Projects, **Undergraduate Research**, **Diversity/Global Learning**, **Service and Community-Based Learning**, **Internships and Capstone Experiences**
- Principles of Excellence include: Using **Essential Learning Outcomes** to structure the curriculum, connect each student's individual plan of study to the Essential Learning Outcomes, immerse students in active **Analysis**, **Problem Solving** and **Communication**, engage with big questions about contemporary and enduring issues, connect knowledge with engaged learning on "real world" problems, foster **Civic**, **Intercultural** and **Ethical** learning, and assess student's ability to apply learning to complex problems.

Appendix 7: Fitchburg State University Core Values, Mission and Vision

- Fitchburg State University Values **Community** through local partnerships
- Fitchburg State University's mission involves blending liberal arts and sciences with professional programs, and fostering **lifelong learning** and **civic** and **global** responsibility
- We prepare students for a **global society**, create a **culture of diversity** and provide real-world opportunities for students and collaborative solutions to community issues.

Appendix 8: Fitchburg State University Strategic Plan

- Align Liberal Arts and Sciences core curriculum with values including **meta-cognition**, **critical and creative thinking**, **inductive and deductive reasoning**, **oral** and **written communication**, **ethical reasoning**, **social justice**, **problem sensitivity** and **cross-disciplinary experience**.
- Increase collaboration in academic programs through **team teaching**, **learning communities**, **interdisciplinary course development** and **research opportunities** and support **high impact learning experiences**.
- Explore the creation of a regularly-assessed **digital literacy** standard for our students to ensure all students are prepared for the present learning environment.
- Further develop **multicultural competencies** in students, faculty and staff.
- Develop a **freshman year experience**.
- Increase opportunities for **community-based student research**, **service learning** and **community-based learning**.
- Promote student development of **civic competencies** through **service or applied learning** to address social, public and community concerns.

Appendix 9: LA&S work incorporated into Fitchburg State University Development Days

- Phase 1 resulted in refinement and application of rubrics for **Aesthetic Appreciation**, **Citizenship through Critical Analysis of Events**, **Ethical Reasoning**, **Problem Solving through Inquiry and Data Analysis**, **Problem Solving through Quantitative Literacy**, and **Written Communication**.

- Phase 2 resulted in suggested strategies to support **critical analysis and logical thinking** by helping students take challenging positions through guided pairing, sharing, peer review, and explicit brainstorming of prior knowledge, ideas, and counter-arguments.
- Phase 2 also resulted in suggested strategies to support **reading** through training and feedback on annotation, reading journals, reading summaries and analysis of citations.
- Phase 3 revealed that we need to place more emphasis on learning outcomes such as **information literacy, reading, oral communication, critical thinking, global diversity, foreign language competency, interdisciplinary learning, and financial literacy.**
- Phase 3 also revealed that we need to more explicitly link our learning outcomes to our courses through **learning communities**, a **common core** of course themes/outcomes with progression from lower to upper level, **community reads**, small class sizes and 4 credit classes with more time to foster **group-work** and assignments connected to **real-world global and local issues.**

Appendix 10: Report on Faculty Teaching Liberal Arts and Sciences Courses

- LA&S courses in **History, Introduction to Psychology, Human Growth and Development and Earth Systems Science** and most **Mathematics** courses tend to be relatively well staffed by full-time faculty.
- LA&S courses in **Art, Life Science, Writing I and II, Health and Fitness, Philosophy, Political Science (or IDIS taught by Political Scientists)** and **Introduction to Sociology** as well as **Applied Statistics** have been under-staffed by full-time faculty.
- In general, courses with a large number of sections, drawing from a limited pool of faculty based on expertise and departmental demands for teaching majors courses, tended to be more likely to be staffed by adjuncts while an interdisciplinary course like **Commonwealth of the Arts** with multiple sections but drawing from the pool of Humanities faculty tended to be taught by full-time faculty.

Appendix 11: Analysis of the Courses Students Take as part of the LA&S Curriculum

- The patterns of course enrollment have not changed dramatically and some changes such as the growth of **Applied Statistics** may result from changes in major requirements.
- The potential to “double-dip” for the Global Diversity requirement and the ARTS with Art or Music designation and CTW cluster with the Behavior designation has driven very large enrollments in **Commonwealth of the Arts** and **Introduction to Sociology** to the point that they are taken by as many students as required courses like **Writing I and II.**
- **Health and Fitness** is also taken by more of our students than any other course, suggesting that the learning outcomes of this course along with **Commonwealth of the Arts, Introduction to Sociology, and Writing I and II** represent the learning outcomes emphasized in the SMT, CTW and Arts portions of most students’ LA&S curriculum.
- In contrast, the rest of the SMT, CTW and Arts requirements are fairly broadly spread across a variety of courses, often dictated by major requirements, particularly in the SMT cluster raising the question of how well learning outcomes align between different courses with similar designations like **Introduction to Psychology and Human Growth and Development.**

Appendix 12: LA&S Cluster Approval Form

- The LA&S cluster approval form provides no information on what should define a course as a CTW, SMT or Arts course. This information is in a separate document.
- The LA&S cluster approval form does not explain how we define or assess the LA&S goals, which must be referenced separately, or how many are appropriate for a course.
- The LA&S cluster approval form does not require any alignment between cluster designation and LA&S goals so we can't insure all goals are being met by the curriculum.

Appendix 13: Syllabus Analysis of Learning Outcomes in High Enrollment LA&S Courses

- Within the Arts cluster, courses like **Commonwealth of the Arts** and literature courses support the **Aesthetic Appreciation** outcome, while **Writing I and II** emphasize **Written Communication, Critical Thinking** and **Information Literacy**.
- Within the CTW cluster, History and Political Science courses build on **Written Communication, Critical Thinking** and **Information Literacy** but courses such as **Introduction to Sociology** and **Human Growth and Development** emphasize instead **Problem Solving through critical analysis of personal decisions**.
- **General Psychology** was more like SMT courses than CTW courses, emphasizing the same outcomes as **Earth Systems Science** and **Applied Statistics, Problem Solving through Scientific Inquiry and Analysis**.
- Some SMT courses in Mathematics and Computer Science focused on **Problem Solving through constructing logical arguments to generate solutions**, rather than inquiry and analysis while **Health and Fitness** did not emphasize the same forms of problem solving as other SMT courses.
- There was virtually no representation of **Ethical Reasoning** or **Civic Engagement** in the high enrollment LA&S courses examined.

Appendix 14: Analysis of Academic Questions from NSSE 2004-2012

- Fitchburg State University students were not as likely as their peers from other institutions **examine the strengths and weaknesses of their own** views, to try to **imagine an issue from someone else's perspective**, or to participate in **community-based projects** like **service learning**, or **community service** and volunteer work than students from other institutions.
- Fitchburg State University students reported the lowest contributions of the institution to their **understanding of people from other racial and ethnic** backgrounds and their **personal code of values and ethics**.
- Seniors every year were less likely to report working on a paper or project that **required integrating ideas or information** from various sources, freshmen were less frequently asked to **give class presentations**, seniors were less frequently asked to work on a paper or project that required **integrating ideas or information from various sources**, and both groups had infrequent experience **preparing multiple drafts of a paper or assignment** relative to students at other institutions.

Appendix 15: LA&S rubrics

- The **Aesthetic Appreciation** rubric assesses artifacts of student work in which students are expected to analyze a creative work, including possibly their own work.
- The **Citizenship through Critical Analysis of Events** rubric assesses artifacts of student work in which students are expected to **explain and express a position** on a modern or historical event **using evidence**, while demonstrating an understanding of the **diversity** of perspectives and cultures involved and making connections to their own **civic life**.
- The **Ethical Reasoning** rubric assesses artifacts of student work in which students are asked to take a position on an ethical issue and develop a rationale to defend it.
- The **Problem Solving through Inquiry and Analysis** and **Problem Solving through Quantitative Literacy** rubrics each assess students' **quantitative reasoning**, in the context of an **experiment** and a logical solution to a **quantitative problem** respectively.
- The **Written Communication** rubric assess artifacts of student work in which students construct written work that effectively supports a specific theme or controlling idea using high quality, relevant **sources of evidence** and appropriate **academic discourse**.

Appendix 16: Learning Outcomes Assessment for the LA&S Review

- The **Aesthetic Appreciation** assessments provided no evidence of composition/performance and no clear pattern of difference in students' ability to analyze or place the art in context, suggesting a possible need to revise the process.
- The **Citizenship through Critical Analysis of Events** assessment suggests students struggle with **taking a position** and **using evidence** to support the position, while the assignments do not ask students to demonstrate an **understanding of diversity** or **engagement with social or civic issues**.
- The **Ethical Reasoning** assessment was not conducted as consistently as the others due to a lack of LA&S courses contributing artifacts. When assessed the results were very variable suggesting a possible need to revise the process.
- The **Problem Solving** assessment highlighted the importance of assessing Inquiry and Analysis and Quantitative Reasoning separately and choosing appropriate assignments, as lab experiments illustrated students struggle with **describing patterns** and **supporting arguments with numerical data**, but exam questions provided little useful evidence.
- The **Written Communication** assessment suggests that students consistently struggle the most with **using evidence** and appropriate **academic discourse**.

Appendix 17: Liberal Arts and Sciences Program Changes

- The implementation of options A, B and C has coincided with no improvement in students completing foreign language, an increase in students declaring minors, but also a recent increase in students declaring option C suggesting the need to revisit these options and their goals.
- The reduction in credits required for the LA&S has coincided with a reduction in the average number of credits beyond 120 with which students graduate and an increase in 4 and 6 year graduation rates consistent with a possible role in these improvements.