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 to 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 assesses 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.