

WEBER STATE UNIVERSITY ACCREDITATION UPDATES

November 2008 Newsletter

Accreditation Updates

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Weber State University will host a team from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities in Fall of 2009 for what is designated a "Regular Interim Visit" which means that it represents the five-year mid-point between our last "Full-Scale Visit" in 2004 and our next "Full-Scale" in 2014. The Regular Interim Visit will likely involve four off-campus visitors who will focus on the recommendations made during the last Full-Scale Visit. The recommendation that will probably be most closely reviewed deals with assessment:

Fall 2004 Recommendation 1:

The Commission recommends that the institution regularly and systematically assess the general education curriculum and document that assessment activities lead to improvement. Based on evidence from faculty, students, administration and the provided documentation, the Evaluation Committee was unable to verify regular and systematic assessment of the general education curriculum and that assessment activities have led to improvement (Standard 2.B and policy 2.2 Educational Assessment).

We have responded seriously to the charge to "regularly and systematically assess general education." I thought that it would be helpful for our campus to briefly review the kind of information we are gathering about the General Education attainment of our students.

Although many of the components of general education for Utah's colleges and universities are determined by Board of Regents policies, WSU has crafted its

own General Education Mission Statement that is consonant with the Regents' policies and incorporates eight learning outcomes. This mission statement was adopted by the university's faculty senate in December 2006 and has been distributed to faculty, staff and students through a university assessment website and printed materials. The assessment of the learning outcomes is a joint responsibility of the standing Faculty General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee and the Provost's Office.

General Education Mission Statement
(Approved by Faculty Senate, December 2006)

General education at Weber State University provides students with a foundation in the arts and sciences that transcends and complements their academic emphases. This exposure to diverse fields of study enables students to make intellectually honest, ethical decisions that reflect a knowledge of and respect for diverse people, ideas and cultures. Such breadth of education also cultivates skills critical to student success in academic, personal, professional and community endeavors both within and beyond the university. Students completing the general education program can:

1. Communicate, understand and interpret ideas and information using written, oral and visual media.
2. Think critically and creatively to construct well-reasoned arguments supported by documented research.
3. Use quantitative, mathematical relationships, operations and reasoning.

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4. Demonstrate an understanding of the history, foundational principles, economics and politics of the United States.
5. Demonstrate proficiency in computer and information literacy.
6. Demonstrate an understanding of how the biological and physical sciences describe and explain the natural world.
7. Demonstrate an understanding of humans, their behavior and their interaction with and within their physical, social, local and global environments.
8. Demonstrate an understanding of diverse forms of aesthetic and intellectual expression.

I. The Weber State University General Education Assessment Process

WSU currently uses a combination of four nationally standardized tests, five local measures and six secondary indicators to assess the general education learning outcomes.

The nationally-normed tests that are used as direct measures or secondary indicators of student learning include:

1. The Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), a direct measure of students' critical thinking, communication, understanding of statistical data and appreciation of diverse viewpoints, (This instrument provides primary indicators for WSU Learning Outcomes 1, 2, 3, 4, 7&8.) has been administered on the campus three times since 2006. After the current year's administration it will be repeated every three years.
2. The National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a secondary measure of students' understanding of civic systems in the United States and diverse cultures and expressions and a direct measure of students' participation in oral and written expression, community service and student scholarship, including research, (The NSSE is used as a primary indicator for WSU Learning Outcomes 1,2,4, 7&8) has been administered four times since 2000 and is repeated at least every three years.

3. The Noel-Levitz Student Satisfaction Survey (Noel-Levitz), which allows a direct measure of students' perceptions regarding their learning and the academic and administrative systems that impeded or support that learning, (These surveys provide secondary indicators for all WSU Learning Outcomes.) has been given five times since 1997 and is repeated every three years.

4. The Higher Education Research Institute Faculty Survey (HERI), which directly measures the academic practices of faculty (secondary indicators for all WSU Learning Outcomes) and provides an important baseline for changes in programs or pedagogical practices, has been administered once and will be repeated every three years.

WSU has now gathered sufficient data from these nationally-normed assessment tools to both provide direction for program changes and resource decisions and to provide a baseline against which the locally developed measures can be normed.

Locally-developed assessments include:

1. Review of educational portfolios. Several programs including Art, Teacher Education, the Community Involvement Center, the Bachelor of Integrated Studies and the Honor's Program use portfolios either by themselves or in conjunction with capstone courses to assess general education outcomes. The Faculty General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee is facilitating the broader use of electronic portfolios this year, following up on an earlier pilot project which suggested that such portfolios showed promise as a basis for cross-discipline general education assessment. (These provide primary and secondary indicators for all WSU General Education Learning Outcomes.) Each of these programs report general education outcomes as part of their annual assessment report. These general education outcomes are currently normed and reported from within the disciplines, however there are efforts to establish shared rubrics that would allow for cross-disciplinary norming.

2. Capstone Courses. Approximately eighty percent of all WSU students participate in a capstone class or project. (These provide primary and secondary indicators for all WSU General Education Learning Outcomes.) General education attainment is assessed in each of these summative settings and is reported as part of each college's annual assessment report. As with the portfolio data, these general education outcomes are presently normed within the disciplines. To allow the data from the portfolios and capstone courses to be more easily compared, the Faculty General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee is working this year on expanding the learning outcomes to a set of shared developmental rubrics for each of the general education learning outcomes.

3. Grades, which reflect attainment of general education competencies in general education and discipline courses.

4. Graduating student outcomes surveys. We have administered a general survey to all graduating seniors. In addition, many departments use this as a way of assessing summative attainment of disciplinary and general education learning outcomes.

5. Targeted locally developed surveys. For example, the Community Involvement Center (CIC) administers a survey to students enrolled in community-based learning courses asking students for feedback in four general areas: a) perception of service-learning; b) evaluation of the service-learning courses; c) attitude toward community involvement; d) influence of service on major or profession; and e) personal reflections on service. Other campus areas have similar surveys that elicit information specific to their program.

“Approximately eighty percent of all WSU students participate in a capstone class or project.”

Other data that provides both secondary evidence of general education attainment includes:

6. Scores on nationally standardized exams that reflect general education proficiency. Such exams are associated with most of the programs in the College of Health Professions and in many of the programs within the College of Applied Science and Technology. These include:

- CLT/MLT (medical laboratory technician) and CLS/MT (medical technologist) and Board of Registry exams by the American Society for Clinical Pathology
- American Dental Association Nurse Hygiene Board exam
- National Registry EMT and Paramedic exams
- American Registry of Radiologic Technologists Certification exam, American Registry of Diagnostic Medical Sonographers exam, Nuclear Medicine Technology Certification Board exam, ISCD - International Society of Clinical Densitometry exam, Certification Board for Radiology Practitioner Assistants exam
- Registered Health Information Technology exam and the Registered Health Information Administrator exam
- National Board for Respiratory Care Certified Respiratory Therapist exam and the Registry Examination for Advanced Respiratory Therapists exam.
- National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses and National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses
- Certified computer technician exams including A+, MCSA, and MCSE
- Automotive technician exams given by the National Association for Automotive Service Excellence

7. Each department tracks discipline-based outcomes and general education outcomes. These results are reflected in each department's annual assessment report. These reports are analyzed and then placed on a shared assessment website.

8. Rates of participation in undergraduate research, which reflect successful integration of general education skills and discipline-based knowledge.
9. Participation rates in community service or other civic engagement, which are indicators of understanding of civics and diverse cultures.
10. Graduation rates, which reflect successful utilization of general education skills in upper division discipline based classes.
11. Placement rates, which suggest attainment of competency in general education skills that correspond to entry-level job expectations.
12. Employer surveys, which reflect proficiency of graduates in employing general education skills and knowledge in practical work setting.

The following chart indicates the sources used to assess each general education learning outcome.

WSU General Education Learning Outcomes	Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
1. Communicate, understand and interpret ideas and information using written, oral and visual media.	CLA, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Graduating Student Exams Grades in Required Composition and Communications Classes	NSSE, Noel-Levitz, HERI, GSOS, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Grades, Graduation Rates, Placement Rates, Undergraduate Research, Civic Engagement, Graduation Survey, Employer Survey
2. Think critically and creatively to construct well-reasoned arguments supported by documented research.	CLA, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Graduating Student Exams Grades in Required Composition, Mathematics, Social Sciences, American Institutions and Communications Classes	NSSE, Noel-Levitz, HERI, GSOS, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Grades, Graduation Rates, Placement Rates, Undergraduate Research, Civic Engagement, Graduation Survey, Employer Survey
3. Use quantitative, mathematical relationships, operations and reasoning.	CLA, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Graduating Student Exams Grades in Required Mathematics and Computer Literacy Classes	NSSE, Noel-Levitz, HERI, GSOS, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Grades, Graduation Rates, Placement Rates, Undergraduate Research, Civic Engagement, Graduation Survey, Employer Survey
4. Demonstrate understanding of the history, foundational principles, economics and politics of the United States.	CLA, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, Graduating Student Exams, National Certifying Exams, Graduating Student Exams Grades in Required Composition, Mathematics, American Institutions, Social Science and Communications Classes	NSSE, Noel-Levitz, HERI, GSOS, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Grades, Graduation Rates, Placement Rates, Undergraduate Research, Civic Engagement, Graduation Survey, Employer Survey
5. Demonstrate proficiency in computer and information literacy.	Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Graduating Student Exams Grades in Required Mathematics and Computer and Information Literacy Classes	NSSE, Noel-Levitz, HERI, GSOS, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Grades, Graduation Rates, Placement Rates, Undergraduate Research, Civic Engagement, Graduation Survey, Employer Survey

6. Demonstrate an understanding of how the biological and physical sciences describe and explain the natural world.	Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Graduating Student Exams Grades in Required Mathematics, Computer and Information Literacy, Physical Science and Life Science Classes	NSSE, Noel-Levitz, HERI, GSOS, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Grades, Graduation Rates, Placement Rates, Undergraduate Research, Civic Engagement, Graduation Survey, Employer Survey
7. Demonstrate an understanding of humans, their behavior and their interaction with and within their physical, social, local and global environments.	CLA, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Graduating Student Exams Grades in Required American Institutions, Social Science, Humanities, Creative Arts and Communications Classes	NSSE, Noel-Levitz, HERI, GSOS, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Grades, Graduation Rates, Placement Rates, Undergraduate Research, Civic Engagement, Graduation Survey, Employer Survey
8. Demonstrate an understanding of diverse forms of aesthetic and intellectual expression.	Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Graduating Student Exams Grades in Required American Institutions, Social Science, Humanities, Creative Arts and Communications Classes	CLA, NSSE, Noel-Levitz, HERI, GSOS, Portfolios, Capstone Classes, National Certifying Exams, Grades, Graduation Rates, Placement Rates, Undergraduate Research, Civic Engagement, Graduation Survey, Employer Survey

WSU also tracks pedagogy relating to general education. This is important not only as a secondary indicator of learning, but also as a base point that catalogs institutional practices that may need to be changed to improve student learning.

Pedagogy Relating to General Education	Primary Indicators	Secondary Indicators
Course content	Review of syllabi	CLA, Capstone Classes, Local Surveys, National Certifying Exams, Grades
Co-curricular experiences	NSSE, GSOS, Noel-Levitz	CIC Survey, Local Surveys

