Steps in Moving from a General Education Core to an Intellectual Foundations Curriculum: Lessons Learned Along the Way

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Presented at the 10th Annual Texas A&M Assessment Conference
College Station, Texas
February 22, 2010
Overview of Presentation: FAU’s Gen Ed Revitalization

1. Assessment: National and SACS Context
2. Assessment: Florida Context
3. Assessment: Institutional Context
4. Florida Atlantic University’s Revitalizes its General Education Program
5. Lessons Learned Along the Way
6. Checklist for Your Institution
General Education & Learning Outcomes Assessment: The National Context

At the National Symposium on Student Success, Former Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings and others called on colleges to measure and provide evidence of student learning.

“Measuring Up”-National Report Cards By State: Little Data on Whether students are Learning

Outcomes assessment has two purposes

- Accountability (standardized national tests?)
- Assessment/Effectiveness
  —Are Students Learning? How much?
General Education & Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Context

The Regional Level: SACS Accreditation

SACS Core Requirements:

2.5 Institutional Effectiveness

“The institution engages in ongoing, integrated and continuous institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes [...]” (p.16)*

2.7.3 “The institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level [...]” (p.17)*

General Education & Learning Outcomes
Assessment: The Context

The Regional Level: SACS Accreditation

SACS Core Requirements:

2.7.3 “The institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level [...].” (p.17)*

* Substantial component of Undergrad Degree;

• Ensures Breadth of Knowledge;

* Based on a Coherent Rationale.

General Education & Learning Outcomes
Assessment: The Context

SACS Core Requirements:

2.7.3 “The institution requires the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level [...]” (p.17)*

* **Substantial** component of Undergrad Degree; (30 credits Baccalaureate degree, 15 AA)

* Ensures **Breadth** of Knowledge (at least 1 course each from: humanities/ fine arts; social behavioral sciences; mathematics/ natural science).

* Based on a Coherent Rationale.
SACS-Gen Ed. Breadth

Courses in basic composition that do not contain a literature component, courses in oral communication, and introductory foreign language courses are *skill courses* and not pure humanities courses. Therefore, for purposes of meeting this standard, none of the above may be the *one* course designated to fulfill the humanities/fine arts requirement CR 2.7.3
General Education & Learning Outcomes
Assessment: The Context

The State Level: Florida

Florida Board of Governors requires:

all institutions in its State University System to develop “Academic Learning Compacts” for all undergraduate degree programs.
General Education & Learning Outcomes Assessment: The Context

The State Level: Florida

Florida Board of Governors states:
A baccalaureate degree shall require no more than 120 semester hours of college credit, including 36 hours of general education courses in the subject areas of: communication, math, social science, humanities and natural science.
General Education Implementation Strategies

- Smorgasbord Distribution for Gen. Education
- Common Core Distribution for Gen. Education
- Intellectual Foundations Strategy for General Education: Focus on Student Learning Outcomes in each Foundation area.
- Focus campus-wide attention on teaching and learning related to these Key Student Learning Outcomes
FAU’s General Education Program Reborn: Vision, Goals, and Organizing Document (Coherent Rationale)

Intend to:

- Shape the Campus Culture
- Shape Campus Priorities for General Education
- Clarify learning priorities for General Education
- Focus campus-wide attention on teaching and learning related to these Key Indicators of Student Success
General Education Implementation Strategies

- Intellectual Foundations Strategy for General Education: Focus on Student Learning Outcomes in each Foundation area.

- Focus campus-wide attention on teaching and learning related to outcomes across all Intellectual Foundations/Gen Ed courses (e.g., Critical Thinking)

- FAU moved from simple Gen. Ed. Distribution to Learning Outcomes Model
Florida Atlantic’s General Education Goals:

- **Shape the FAU Campus Culture** and provide its students with a **Comprehensive Education** -- NOT just career training

- **Clarify learning priorities** for FAU’s General Education

- **Focus campus-wide attention on teaching and learning related to these Key Indicators of Student Success**
Institutional Level: Florida Atlantic University’s General Educational Mission:

PROVIDING A Broad LIBERAL ARTS and SCIENCES EDUCATION — Not Just Career Training

—Producing Graduates Who Can:

- intelligently analyze information
- appreciate diverse peoples and ideas
- adapt to change through the self-motivated acquisition of new knowledge.
General Education and Learning Outcomes Assessment

Florida Atlantic University’s Five General Education Goals:

- Graduates will be able to THINK CRITICALLY
- Graduates will be able to COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
- Graduates will be able to UNDERSTAND How KNOWLEDGE is Discovered, Challenged, and Transformed
- Graduates will be able UNDERSTAND ETHICS and ETHICAL BEHAVIOR
- Graduates will demonstrate KNOWLEDGE in Several DISCIPLINES
General Education and Learning Outcomes Assessment

Intellectual Foundations intended to produce graduates “who can intelligently analyze information, appreciate diverse peoples and ideas, and adapt to change through the self-motivated acquisition of new knowledge.”
FAU General Education:

- Students must complete a minimum of thirty-six credit hours of general education coursework, distributed as indicated in the six categories below.
Revitalizing General Educ. At FAU: Faculty Based

- Undergrad Policy Committee (UPC) Formed Task Force: Common Core Committee
- Common Core Committee composed of faculty representatives from all Colleges and nonvoting Undergrad. Dean & Univ. Director of Assessment
- Returned to UPC with Revitalization Plan who then brought it to Faculty Senate
Revitalizing General Educ. At FAU: Faculty Based

- Common Core Committee provided name for new General Education/Common Core: **Intellectual Foundations**
- CCC delineated their Vision of Intellectual Foundation and its Purpose
Purpose of Intellectual Foundations

- Higher education should go well beyond preparing individuals for careers.

- Higher Ed should provide broad intellectual enrichment through systematic exposure to a diversity of academic experiences.
The purpose of the core curriculum is to develop the intellectual skills, habits of thought, ethical values and love of learning that transcend the choice of major. These are the hallmarks of educated men and women capable of meeting effectively the social, political and economic challenges of contemporary life.
Revitalizing General Educ. At FAU: Faculty Based

- University Faculty Senate approved new Name for General Educ. Program
- University Faculty Senate approved new statement of purpose
- University Faculty Senate approved new process to approve Intellectual Foundations Courses from ZERO Baseline
Revitalizing General Educ. 
At FAU: Faculty Based

- Courses Must submit Proposal with Student Learning Outcomes for the specific course which are linked to Intellectual Foundation Learning outcomes
- Courses must submit Syllabus
- Questions asked: Common Syllabus?
- Syllabus Template for Course?
Revitalizing General Educ. At FAU: Faculty Based

- Approval Process for Courses involve steps:
  - Common Core Subcommittee approval;
    - Each Intellectual Foundation has its own CCC subcommittee with faculty from most FAU colleges.
  - Common Core Committee Approval;
  - Undergraduate Policy Committee Approval
Revitalizing General Educ. At FAU: Faculty Based

- Courses completed approval process end of spring 2009 semester;
- August 2009, Dean of Undergraduate Programs sent e-mails and letters to each faculty member teaching a course in each foundation area.
- Letter told each faculty of purpose of Intellectual Foundations.
Revitalizing General Educ.: Dean’s Letter to Faculty

Dean’s Letter told each faculty of general education learning outcomes and asked them to include them in their Intellectual Foundations Course.

Dean expected faculty include the SPECIFIC LEARNING OUTCOMES for their Foundation Area (1-6)
Revitalizing Next Steps:

- Faculty Learning Communities
- Building Support among Faculty:
  - Faculty mini grants program
  - Faculty Learning Communities (Teaching and Learning Center)
  - Lower Division Math Coordinator
  - WAC program Coordinator roles out rubric to use in teaching
FAU General Education Requirements (6 credits each):

I. Foundations of Written Communication

II. Foundations of Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning

III. Foundations of Science and the Natural World
FAU General Education Requirements (6 credits each):

IV. Foundations of Society and Human Behavior

V. Foundations in Global Citizenship

VI. Foundations of Creative Expression
FAU General Education
Learning Outcomes:

1. Foundations of Written Communication
   learning outcomes:

   1. Produce clear writing
   2. Respond critically to a variety of written materials in order to position their own ideas relative to the arguments of others.
   3. Use writing to think critically-examining assumptions that underlie the readings and their own writing.
   4. Demonstrate an understanding of the ethical standards that apply to the use of external sources in one’s writing.
II. Foundations of Mathematics and Quantitative Reasoning

1. Demonstrate an understanding of mathematical theories and their application.
2. Be able to identify and apply mathematical concepts most appropriate to solving quantitative problems.
FAU General Education
Learning Outcomes:

III. Foundations of Sciences and the Natural World: Demonstrate an understanding of:

- 1. the nature of science, including important principles and paradigms;
- 2. scientific inquiry: how to pose questions and how to develop possible explanations;
- 3. the limits of scientific knowledge and of how scientific knowledge changes.

- 4. Ability to discern claims based upon scientific method versus others.
- 5. Be able to analyze data, draw conclusions from data, and demonstrate an understanding of how experiments are conducted.
IV. Foundations of Society and Human Behavior

- Identify patterns of human behavior;
- Demonstrate an understanding of how political, social, cultural, or economic institutions influence behavior;
- Understand key social science methods and their theoretical foundations;
- Apply social science methods.
V. Foundations in Global Citizenship

- Demonstrate an understanding of different individ., cultural, & national identities (include. Non-western);
- Demonstrate the economic, political, environmental, and/or social processes that influence human action/interaction
VI. Foundations of Creative Expression:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of one or more forms/genres of creative expression;
2. The theory or method behind the creative expression;
3. The social cultural, or historical context of the cultural expression.
Matrix of FAU’s General Education Student Learning Outcome Goals: Align with Courses in 6 Knowledge Areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THINK CRITICALLY</th>
<th>COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE DISCOVERY</th>
<th>KNOWLEDGE</th>
<th>ETHICS</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Area 1-Course 1</td>
<td>Area 1-Course 1</td>
<td>Area 1-Course 2</td>
<td>Area 1-Courses 1 and 2</td>
<td>Area 1-Course 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area 2-Course 1</td>
<td>Area 2-Course 2</td>
<td>Area 2-Course 1</td>
<td>Area 2-Courses 1-5</td>
<td>Area 2-Course 6</td>
</tr>
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Organizing the General Education Assessment Process

**Step 1: The General Education Plan**

**Step 2: Define goals:** Five General Education Goals have been defined. At least one of the FAU General Education Goals must be a course goal for each Gen Ed class. Faculty must also add foundation area goals. Course specific goals may be added.

**Step 3:** Student learning outcomes for each intellectual foundation area have been defined.

**Step 4:** Identify measures and assessment methods. This will be the job of the Faculty Learning Commun.

**Step 5:** Define rubrics to measure the Stud. Learning Outcomes. (Faculty Learning Community)
Revitalizing Gen Ed: Lessons Learned

1. Academic Leadership needed (Undergraduate Dean or Provost)

2. Use existing faculty governance structure as starting point - Create Task force with subgroups

3. New name for gen. ed. helps

4. Need purpose, rationale, vision

5. Start from Scratch: Must Apply (Proposal and Syllabus)
6. Application Process: justify course in context of current goals and student learning outcomes

- Specific expected student learning outcomes for course
- Explain how will be dealt with across sections
- Provide Template for multi-section course
Revitalizing Gen Ed: Lessons Learned

7. Build in Reaffirmation Process for General Education Courses:
   - Review included in Academic Program Reviews

8. Use faculty learning communities to review after 1 year
Revitalizing Gen Ed: Lessons Learned

9. Encourage enthusiasm and excitement (e.g., faculty mini-grants, recognition)
10. Communicate and Use Results
11. Writing SMART Student Learning Outcomes for General Education often requires assistance:

- Consider Handouts and Workshops at different points along the way
- Use Faculty Learning Communities to refine SMART outcomes
Gen Ed Assessment Cycle

**Use...**
Results...
To improve teaching and learning of Gen Ed

**Assess...**
Student achievement against those Gen Ed goals and outcomes

**Plan...**
Establish General Educ. Learning Goals And Student Learning Outcomes

**Implement...**
Align Gen Ed Goals and Courses:
Provide Opportunities for students to achieve those goals and outcomes

The Assessment Cycle Provides Continuous Feedback
FAU’s General Education Assessment Needs to:

- Provide Evidence that FAU’s general education assessment process is functioning on a continuous cycle
- Provide Evidence that FAU students are achieving gen. ed. competencies
General Education and Learning Outcomes Assessment

Review of Florida Atlantic University’s Expected General Education Competencies:

- Graduates will be able to THINK CRITICALLY
- Graduates will be able to COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
- Graduates will be able to UNDERSTAND How KNOWLEDGE is Discovered, Challenged, and Transformed
- Graduates will be able UNDERSTAND ETHICS and ETHICAL BEHAVIOR
- Graduates will demonstrate KNOWLEDGE in Several DISCIPLINES
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