University-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (UWAAC) Report
for Vice President of Academic Affairs Moore
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Submitted by:

Beth Costner
Steve Dannelly
]ack DeRochi, Co-Chair
Matt Hayes, Co-Chair
Lisa Johnson
Jim Johnston
Kelly Richardson
Amy Sullivan
Michael Williams

The University-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (UWAAC) is recommending four new university-level competencies for approval during the 2010-2011 academic year. This report is organized according to the following outline:

I. History and Context for UWAAC Report

II. Analysis of Current Winthrop Student Learning Outcomes

III. Analysis of External Competencies and Goals

    a. ULCs at Accreditation Agencies and Peer Institutions

    b. Incoming Student Expectations and Competencies

    c. Employer Interests and Expectations

IV. List and Definition of Proposed Winthrop ULCs

V. Suggestions for Future Design and Use of Assessment Strategies and Data

VI. References

VII. Glossary of Terms

I. <u>History and Context for UWAAC Report</u>

Winthrop University General Education and Assessment, 2000-2010

After the 2000 Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) Reaffirmation process, Winthrop began seeking new ways to improve its General Education program. The Vice President of Academic Affairs convened a General Education Task Force to review our General Education Goals and develop a new General Education program.

The General Education Task Force reaffirmed the appropriateness of the General Education Goals (originally adopted in 1984):

> Goal One: To communicate clearly and effectively in standard English.
> Goal Two: To acquire and appreciate quantitative skills.
> Goal Three: To use critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and a variety of research methods.
> Goal Four: To recognize and appreciate human diversity (both past and present) as well as the diversity of ideas, institutions, philosophies, moral codes, and ethical principles.
> Goal Five: To understand scientific knowledge in terms of its methods or acquisition, its specific quantitative nature, and its dynamic and contingent character.
> Goal Six: To understand aesthetic values, the creative process, and the interconnectedness of the literary, visual, and performing arts throughout the history of civilization.
> Goal Seven: To examine values, attitudes, beliefs, and habits which define the nature and quality of life.
> (Winthrop University, 2010, pp. 14-15)

However, the Task Force proposed a new curriculum, which was approved by the Faculty Conference on April 19, 2002. In this new program, incoming Winthrop University freshmen would each take the same sequence of General Education Core courses (now named the Touchstone Core), namely ACAD 101 (Principles of the Learning Academy), Writing 101 (Introduction to Academic Discourse), HMXP 102 (The Human Experience), and CRTW 201 (Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing). In addition to the Touchstone Core, students would fulfill the remainder of the new General Education Program (now named the Touchstone Program) by selecting additional courses from across the university that satisfy the following requirements:

> Critical Skills
> - o   Quantitative Skills
> - o   Technology
> - o   Oral Communication
> - o   Logic / Language / Semiotics
> Skills for a Common Experience and Thinking Across Disciplines
> - o   Global Perspectives
> - o   Historical Perspectives
> Developing Critical Skills and Applying them to Disciplines
> - o   Social Science, Humanities and Arts
> (Winthrop University, 2010, pp. 16)

With the approval of the Touchstone Program, the General Education Assessment Advisory Committee was formed by Vice President Moore in order to review the effectiveness of the program's fulfillment of the General Education goals. Over the last five years, while gathering assessment data, it became apparent that a gap existed between what was expected of students as illustrated by the original seven General

Education Goals and the new curriculum as prescribed by the Touchstone Program. Specifically, during the "Recertification" process of 2009-2010, when courses were required to apply for recertification as courses that met General Education Guidelines, it became clear that the courses fulfilled the requirements of the new Touchstone Program but not the original seven General Education Goals. For example, courses were being submitted for specific categories—Quantitative Skills, Technology, Oral Communication, etc—but not clearly defined in terms of how they met General Education Goals.

This development arose from two primary causes. First, the current General Education Goals were not easily assessable across, nor applicable to, all programs of study. Second, because of the creation of the Touchstone Core, a perception materialized that the early sequence of common courses satisfies the expectation of all seven general education goals and thus do not have any bearing on upper-level curriculum development for majors. Because the General Education Goals were not perceived as graduation outcomes, departments did not consistently link their majors to the General Education program.

Emerging SACS Rhetoric

While Winthrop University was recognizing the gap as revealed by its assessment protocol, a shift emerged in the rhetoric used at SACS meetings and workshops: SACS colleagues questioned the assumption that applying the goals only to students in their first two years was not an accurate means for measuring learning outcomes for graduates. Instead, they suggested that adding summative assessment protocols to existing formative assessment protocols would yield the most concrete data for analyzing the effectiveness of our curriculum.

Committee Charge

Based on this feedback from our SACS colleagues and the data that emerged from our own assessment procedures, Winthrop recognized that a distinction exists between goals for student experiences (the rhetoric of our current general education goals) and specific competencies we expect each student to possess upon graduation. As a result, Dr. Tom Moore, Vice President for Academic Affairs, began consulting with Deans, Chairs, and other assessment advisors to determine the best course of action. After deliberation, Dr. Moore charged the General Education Assessment Advisory Committee—now renamed the University-Wide Academic Assessment Committee (UWAAC)—to develop university-level competencies (ULCs) for all Winthrop University graduates and provide assessment suggestions for all programs of study. Specifically, the mission of UWAAC is to "recommend to the Vice President for Academic Affairs appropriate University-level Undergraduate Competencies that are clear, assessable, and attainable by Winthrop graduates across degree programs." The committee commenced with developing university-level competencies that are consistent with Winthrop University's Mission:

> Winthrop students acquire and develop knowledge, skills, capabilities, and values that enrich their lives and prepare them to meet the needs and challenges of the contemporary world, including the ability to communicate effectively, appreciate

diversity, work collaboratively, synthesize knowledge, solve complex problems, and adapt to change. (Winthrop University, 2010, p. 1)

Committee Composition

UWAAC is composed of the following members:

Beth Costner (Mathematics)
Steve Dannelly (Computer Science)
Jack DeRochi (English), Co-Chair
Matt Hayes (Psychology), Co-Chair
Lisa Johnson (Education)
Jim Johnston (Biology)
Kelly Richardson (English)
Amy Sullivan (Center for Career and Civic Engagement)
Michael Williams (Music)

In addition, UWAAC is assisted by Dean Gloria Jones and Associate Dean Tim Daugherty (University College), and the Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services (AAAS)—specifically, Karen Jones (Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs), Jean Silagyi-Rebovich, and Nancy Scurry.

II. Analysis of Current Winthrop Student Learning Outcomes

A subcommittee with at least one faculty representative from all degree-granting colleges reviewed program-level student learning outcomes (SLOs) from assessment reports submitted for the 2008-2009 academic year. Outcomes were coded using an "emerging theme" approach, starting with categories evident from program-level descriptions in documents presented to the entire committee. For example, the Association of American of Colleges and Universities' (AAC&U) vision—Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP)—provided much of the language considered for this report. From these multiple documents, the committee began examining Winthrop's existing SLOs based on the following categories: a) communication, b) critical thinking, c) taking the perspective of others, d) discipline-specific ideas, and e) other.

Based on the examination of SLOs, two significant adjustments were made to the category labels. First, "Problem Solving" was added to "Critical Thinking" because many SLOs from multiple colleges approached "critical thinking" in terms of conducting research to explore a question or issue. Second, "Discipline's Interconnectedness with Broader Community" became a distinct category because a consistent theme emerged from many SLOs from multiple colleges, namely the concept of placing the discipline in the context of a broader community, or examining the discipline from a historical perspective.

After extensive analysis, the subcommittee identified the four primary areas of competency listed in Table 1. These primary categories became the precursors of the University-level Competencies proposed in this report. Through the process of discussing trends found during individual data examination, the group created Table 1 for discussion in the full committee meeting. Table 2 identifies SLOs organized by category and college to serve as examples. Although few programs had SLOs coded in all four categories, all programs had a SLO coded in at least one of the categories. In addition, special attention was given to the verbs and actions described in the program SLOs and how those SLOs (and potential ULCs) could be assessed in both general education cases and at the program level through content-specific explorations.

Table1: Data presented on SLO trends

General Areas Of Competency	Appreciation (value) of multiple perspectives	Discipline's Interconnectedness with Broader Community	Critical Thinking / Problem Solving	Communication and Expression
Percentage of programs (n=50) SLO *	38%	32%	79%^	68%^
Category of Assessment	Attitude	Knowledge	Skill	Skill
Related Concepts	• Self and others • Diversity • Ethics • Internal relationships with others • Recognize diverse points of view	• External, Contextual • Historical • Content, Subject matter • Interconnectedness • Global Connections	• Problem solving • Research • Data collection • Analysis and diagnosis	• Oral and written • Visual, auditory • Exchange of ideas • Means or formats

*The percentages are an average of the individual counts made after working definitions were established by the subcommittee.

^ These categories had the greatest difference (although still within 10 percentage points); discussion by subcommittee members identified that one member counted those that might fall in both as communication and the other counted them as critical thinking and problem solving.

Table 2: Example SLOs* by College

	CVPA	CBA	CAS	COE
Appreciation of multiple perspectives	Students should demonstrate openness to new ideas, new ways of working and new ways of moving and respond to these opportunities in accordance with this value.	Students demonstrate the use of an ethical framework in recognizing and explaining the consequences of business administration.	Students demonstrate understanding of diversity issues and minority representations in the development of strategic communication plans.	Students will demonstrate appropriate professional and ethical behaviors clinical settings.
Discipline's Interconnectedness with Broader Community	Students view dance from a cultural-historical perspective that recognizes the multiple forces that impact the art form.	Students create an awareness of historical and contemporary perspectives in business administration.	Students understand the forms and mechanisms of oppression and discrimination and apply strategies of advocacy and social change that advance social and economic justice. Students understand both historical milestones and current and future trends that shape the discipline.	Students integrate concepts of global interdependence as they relate to individuals, families, consumers, and communities to their areas of specialization.
Critical Thinking / Problem Solving	Students demonstrate an understanding of the elements of music, including musicianship, analysis, and synthesis. Students synthesize knowledge and are able to creatively solve problems for a wide range of environments and for a diverse group of users.	Students acquire critical thinking and problem solving skills and will engage in skeptical inquiry to propose solutions to problems in a collaborative team approach.	Students demonstrate rational decision making using quantitative tools, strategies, and data. Students demonstrate critical thinking strategies by applying solutions to unstructured problems.	Students demonstrate competence in observing, documenting, and assessing child development and learning, including diverse family preferences, concerns, and resources.

	CVPA	CBA	CAS	COE
Communication and Expression	Students create end products that meet audience needs and intended contexts for print, screen, or built environments.	Students demonstrate persuasive communication skills by a) researching, organizing, and writing an effective document in a professional manner; b) preparing and delivering a professional presentation on a business topic.	Students prepare and use effective visuals (photographs, computer graphics, power points, charts, graphs, and tables) to complement their writing and oral presentations.	Students use effective communication and pedagogical skills and strategies to enhance student engagement and learning.

*Attempts have been made to eliminate program specific references

The subcommittee then presented findings of the exploration of Winthrop program SLOs to the full UWAAC committee for further development and revision. In combination with data collected by another subcommittee exploring off-campus resources, UWAAC revised and approved the four specific ULCs. Special attention was again given to ways in which these competencies could be assessed in both general education experiences and at the program level through content-specific explorations.

III. Analysis of External Competencies and Goals

A. ULCs of Accrediting Agencies and Peer Institutions

A second subcommittee conducted a web search of organizations devoted to higher education and from numerous colleges and universities looking for insights into ULCs. The web sites came from a list provided by Winthrop's Office of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services (AAAS). Two of the sites were maintained by agencies, namely the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE) and the AAC&U. The AAHE web site contained the recommendations from the 2002-2003 Pew-sponsored pilot study of five states (Illinois, Kentucky, Nevada, Oklahoma, and South Carolina). This study collected information on college-level learning from tests that students take when they enter and then when they leave college, national assessments of adult literacy, and tests of general intellectual skills given to a representative sample of students. The results make it possible to assess both the intellectual capital available to these states and the contributions their colleges and universities made to this intellectual capital. AAC&U's LEAP vision uses the term "liberal education" to refer to "a philosophy of education that empowers individuals with core knowledge and transferable skills and cultivates social responsibility and a strong sense of ethics and values" (AAC&U, *n.d.*).

Additional information was gathered from colleges and universities that were on the list provided by AAAS. Most of these had been through a SACS-type reaffirmation, although not since 2008. None of these sites actually listed these competencies as being

"university-level competencies." The institutions ranged from two-year technical colleges to four-year primarily undergraduate institutions to large graduate-degree-granting universities, several of which have their general education goals set by state-wide Departments of Higher Education (e.g., Texas and Georgia).

The data given below italicizes the source of the information and then gives a brief listing of the competencies.

<u>Examples of University-Level Competencies from AAHE and AAC&U</u>

From Pew sponsored pilot study of 5 states:
1) Reading and interpreting texts
2) Obtaining or action on information obtained in tabular or graphic displays
3) Understanding numbers or graphs and performing calculations

Learning Outcomes Assessment
1) Communication
2) Critical Thinking
3) Quantitative Reasoning

AAC&U Essential Learning Outcomes (The National Leadership Council for Liberal Education & America's Promise, 2007, p. 3)
1) Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Natural and Physical World
   a. Grounded in study of the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts
   b. Focused through engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring
2) Intellectual and Practical Skills
   a. Inquiry, critical and creative writing
   b. Written and oral communication
   c. Quantitative literacy
   d. Information literacy
   e. Teamwork and problem solving
3) Individual and Social Responsibility
   a. Civic knowledge and engagement – local and global
   b. Intercultural knowledge and competence
   c. Ethical reasoning and action
   d. Foundations and skills for lifelong learning
4) Integrative Learning
   a. Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

      b. Demonstrated capacity to adapt knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and questions

<u>Examples of University-Level Competencies from Colleges and Universities</u>

College of Charleston (2006)
Core curriculum will equip each student with crucial intellectual skills in
1) Analysis
2) Research
3) Communication

Gordon College (2004)
1) Students will demonstrate competence in college-level reading and writing
2) Students will demonstrate competence in oral communication
3) Students will conduct routine information technology tasks in a variety of computer applications
4) Students will demonstrate a basic knowledge of the fundamentals of college-level mathematics
5) Students will demonstrate a basic knowledge of and proficiency in using the scientific method

Northeastern Technical College (2007)
Graduates will be able to
1) Comprehend and generate written and oral communication
2) Identify and use sources of information
3) Solve problems incorporating critical thinking, reasoning, and creativity
4) Apply mathematical/computational skills to solve problems
5) Practice interpersonal skills and teamwork
6) Perform professional/technical skills
7) Demonstrate an awareness of an international perspective

Francis Marion University (2005)
Students will demonstrate
1) The ability to write and speak English clearly, logically, creatively, and effectively
2) The ability to read and listen with understanding and comprehension
3) The ability to locate, organize, document, present, and use information and ideas
4) An understanding of fundamental mathematical principles and the skills to apply them
5) The ability to reason logically and think critically in order to improve problem-solving skills and the ability to make informed and responsible choices

Louisiana Universities (Louisiana Board of Regents, 2009):

Undergraduate program completers, depending on the respective degree level, shall obtain appropriate competencies as follows:

1) To communicate effectively in oral and written English
2) To read with comprehension
3) To reason abstractly and think critically
4) To use numerical data and statistics
5) To apply the scientific method
6) To apply key technological and informational applications
7) To acquire skills needed to learn independently

University of Virginia (2009)

A good liberal arts education must provide students with an extensive base of intellectual content and skills that enables them to:

1) Explore ideas
2) Evaluate evidence critically
3) Draw reasoned conclusions
4) Communicate one's thoughts in a clear, coherent manner

Texas Tech University (2004)

1) Students are able to communicate effectively in clear and correct prose in a style appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience
2) Students acquire the basic skills to speak and listen effectively and critically
3) Students are quantitatively literate and able to apply basic mathematical tools in solution of real-world problems
4) Students are able to understand, construct, and evaluate relationships in the natural sciences and understand the bases for building and testing theories
5) Students practice critical analysis

Hillsborough Community College (2009, p. 47)

Students who complete the general education core curriculum should be able to demonstrate their

1) Ability to think critically
2) Ability to express themselves clearly in written and oral communication
3) Ability to express themselves effectively in quantitative terms
4) Understanding of and appreciation for the value of culture
5) Appreciation of the scientific method of inquiry and the historical and contemporary impact of science on daily life
6) Understanding of global, political, economic, and historical perspectives
7) Ability to use technology to access, retrieve, process, and communicate information

UT Dallas (2008, pp. 69-71)

1) Communicate effectively in clear and correct prose in a style appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience
2) Be able to apply mathematical tools in solution of real-world problems
3) Understand and evaluate relationships in the natural sciences, and to understand the basis for building and testing theories
4) Appreciate the human condition and human cultures, especially in relation to behaviors, ideas, and values expressed in works of human imagination and thought
5) Understand how social and behavioral scientists discover describe and explain the behaviors and interactions among individuals, groups, institutions, events, and ideas

University of Houston (2008, p. 1)
1) Critical thinking
2) Communication
3) Information literacy
4) Quantitative reasoning

James Madison University (n.d.)
Students become skilled in
1) Questioning
2) Investigating
3) Analyzing
4) Evaluating
5) Communicating

Berea College (n.d.)
The Aims of General Education are
1) Developing knowledge of and gaining appreciation for liberal arts: their histories, limitations, and interrelationships
2) Mastering skills of abstract and logical thinking, critical analysis, literacy (reading, writing, speaking, listening, information seeking), and numeracy
3) Enhancing imagination, sense of personal authority, ethical, religious, and historical consciousness, and habits of inquiry, service, and creativity
4) Developing appreciation of and respect for the experiences of others, especially in terms of race, gender, religion, language, class, cultures, and societies
5) Shaping a community that encourages discussion, reflection, creativity, and action; and which embodies and values freedom, justice, purposeful activity, personal responsibility, and constructive leisure

The general education program at Berea will help students develop the abilities to:
1) Read and listen effectively; write and speak effectively, with integrity and style
2) Think critically and creatively, and reason quantitatively

    3) Develop research strategies and employ appropriate technologies as means to deepen one's knowledge and understanding
    4) Work effectively both independently and collaboratively
    5) Resolve conflicts nonviolently

The University System of Georgia (2010)
    1) Communication skills
    2) Quantitative skills
    3) Civic responsibility and/or civic engagement, and service learning (optional)
    4) Humanities, fine arts, and ethics
    5) Natural sciences, math, and technology
    6) Social Sciences

Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (n.d.)
    1) Effective written communication
    2) Mathematical problem solving
    3) Effective oral communication
    4) Critical thinking
    5) Application of technology

Northeast State (2010)

Educated people
    1) Practice and are literate in the various methods of communication
    2) Recognize individual roles in history, culture, and diverse heritages
    3) Appreciate the web of commonality of all humans in a multicultural world
    4) Recognize the ethics demanded of life
    5) Demonstrate the skills and knowledge of the social and behavioral sciences to analyze the contemporary world
    6) Are familiar with the history and aesthetics of the fine arts
    7) Understand and practice the scientific and mathematical views of the world

Albany State University (n.d.)
    1) Critical thinking
    2) Reading
    3) Writing
    4) Mathematics
    5) Humanities
    6) Social Sciences
    7) Natural Sciences

B. Incoming Student Expectations and Competencies

Approximately 86.8% of Winthrop's students come from SC public schools (Office of Institutional Research, 2010). Therefore, the subcommittee examined information from

the SC State Department of Education website (www.ed.sc.gov) in order to understand the K-12 role in the "competencies" narrative. The website contains a number of data sources that reflect SC public education work. The sheer amount testifies to the role of assessment and accountability in public education. The subcommittee summarized what appeared to be the primary narrative pieces and shared this summary with the entire UWAAC group as part of the external research for the report.

The SC Department of Education and the Education Oversight Committee (2006) outlined the rationale for developing academic standards and explains how schools are to use these standards for curriculum development and assessment. The report not only establishes procedures of development, but it also includes language from the SC Education Accountability Act of 1998, which specifically uses the phrase "competencies." These "competencies" are then to be translated into subject-specific standards. The standards themselves receive more attention on the website than these general competencies, so it was very helpful to see the relationship between the two.

The Appendix includes statements from the SC Education Accountability Act (1998), including

> **SECTION 59-18-300.** *Adoption of educational standards in core academic areas.*
>
> The State Board of Education is directed to adopt grade specific performance oriented educational standards in the core academic areas of mathematics, English/language arts, social studies (history, government, economics, and geography), and science for kindergarten through twelfth grade and for grades nine through twelve adopt specific academic standards for benchmark courses in mathematics, English/language arts, social studies, and science. The standards are to promote the goals of providing every student with the competencies to:
>
> (1) read, view, and listen to complex information in the English language;
> (2) write and speak effectively in the English language;
> (3) solve problems by applying mathematics;
> (4) conduct research and communicate findings;
> (5) understand and apply scientific concepts;
> (6) obtain a working knowledge of world, United States, and South Carolina history, government, economics, and geography; and
> (7) use information to make decisions.
>
> The standards must be reflective of the highest level of academic skills with the

rigor necessary to improve the curriculum and instruction in South Carolina's schools so that students are encouraged to learn at unprecedented levels and must be reflective of the highest level of academic skills at each grade level. (SC Education Accountability Act, 1998, as cited in SC Department of Education & Education Oversight Committee, 2006, p. 13).

The standards are developed for different subject areas and are then explained and developed with a series of more specific indicators. These standards and indicators are also coordinated across grade levels and are connected to the statewide assessment system.

The standards have been "based on the cognitive process and knowledge dimensions of the revised Bloom's taxonomy" (SC Department of Education & Education Oversight Committee, 2006, p. 1) and are assessed through various state measures: Palmetto Assessment of State Standards (PASS, Grades 3-8), End-of-Course Tests, High School Assessment Program (HSAP, Exit Exam), and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

Standards are structured by 1) stating the standard and 2) providing an accompanying paragraph that clarifies grade-specific indicators. UWAAC determined that such an approach would also be helpful for developing Winthrop's ULCs.

C. Employer Interests and Expectations

In a review of university-level competencies employers seek, the subcommittee used the following resources: the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), AAC&U, the Society for Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and the United States Department of Labor.

Sources were selected based on their reputation among recruiters, human resource professionals, and university professionals. Some sources did not provide information on employer expectations of university level competencies or referred to the NACE and/or AAC&U/LEAP surveys in their materials. Only related information from these two sources used are included in these findings.

According to a recent survey by NACE, "Employers taking part in NACE's *Job Outlook 2010* survey ranked communication skills at the top of the skills they seek in potential employees. Rounding out the top five were analytical skills, the ability to work in a team, technical skills, and a strong work ethic" (National Association of Colleges and Employers, 2010).

In a 2010 report commissioned by AAC&U (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2010), employers were asked questions related to current staffing levels, future hiring, and expectations of employees. The report finds

Employers believe that two- and four-year colleges should be placing more emphasis on several key learning outcomes to increase graduates' potential to be successful and contributing members of today's global economy. The learning outcomes that employers perceive to be in need of increased focus range from communication skills to critical thinking and complex problem solving to ethical decision-making to science to the real-world application of knowledge and skills. (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2010, p. 9)

Table 3: Proportion Of Employers Who Say Colleges Should Place More Emphasis Than They Do Today On Selected Learning Outcomes	%
The ability to effectively communicate orally and in writing	89
Critical thinking and analytical reasoning skills	81
The ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings through internships or other hands-on experiences	79
The ability to analyze and solve complex problems	75
The ability to connect choices and actions to ethical decisions	75
Teamwork skills and the ability to collaborate with others in diverse group settings	71
The ability to innovate and be creative	70
Concepts and new developments in science and technology	70
The ability to locate, organize, and evaluate information from multiple sources	68
The ability to understand the global context of situations and decisions	67
Global issues and developments and their implications for the future	65
The ability to work with numbers and understand statistics	63
The role of the United States in the world	57
Cultural diversity in America and other countries	57
Civic knowledge, civic participation, and community engagement	52
Proficiency in a foreign language	45
Democratic institutions and values	40

In a report commissioned by AAC&U, employers were asked to evaluate recent college graduates' preparedness in twelve areas. Employers gave graduates the highest marks for teamwork, ethical judgment, and intercultural skills, and the lowest scores for global knowledge, self-direction, and writing (Peter D. Hart Research Associates, 2008).

Table 4: Employers Evaluate College Graduates' Preparedness in Key Areas			
	Mean rating*	Very well prepared (8-10 ratings)*	Not well prepared (1-5 ratings)*
Teamwork	7.0	39%	17%
Ethical judgment	6.9	38%	19%

Intercultural skills	6.9	38%	19%
Social responsibility	6.7	35%	21%
Quantitative reasoning	6.7	32%	23%
Oral communication	6.6	30%	23%
Self-knowledge	6.5	28%	26%
Adaptability	6.3	24%	30%
Critical thinking	6.3	22%	31%
Writing	6.1	26%	37%
Self-direction	5.9	23%	42%
Global knowledge	5.7	18%	46%

*ratings on 10-point scale: 10 = recent college graduates are extremely well prepared on each quality to succeed in entry level positions or be promoted/advance within the company

After reviewing the above data, the subcommittee noted that "communication" is consistently listed as the top skill employers seek. However, when employers evaluate college graduate preparedness, 23% report that recent graduates are not well-prepared in oral communication; 37% report they are not well-prepared in writing; and 89% of employers say colleges should place more emphasis on this learning outcome.

Analytical skills were listed as both the ability to analyze and solve complex problems or as critical thinking. Ranges of 75% to 81% of employers say that colleges should place more emphasis on this learning outcome.

Teamwork and Ethical Judgment received higher marks in recent graduate preparedness with 39% of employers and 38% respectively, saying recent college graduates are very well-prepared. Even with these higher marks, over 70% of employers still feel colleges should place more emphasis on these two learning outcomes.

IV. List and Definition of Proposed Winthrop ULCs

UWAAC determined that Winthrop's University-Level Competencies should stem as much as possible from current Winthrop assessment plan templates. Although the comprehensive review of *all* program-level SLOs (described above) revealed discipline-specific goals and outcomes for each program, it was apparent that certain themes consistently emerged across the university. All programs had a SLO that addressed at least one of four essential categories: a) critical thinking and problem solving, b) appreciation of multiple perspectives, c) the discipline's interconnectedness with the broader community, and d) communication and expression. The subsequent research into peer institutions, employer expectations of graduates, and incoming student expectations reinforced these competencies as foundational to a university education regardless of major or program of specialization.

The ULCs presented below represent higher-order knowledge, skills, and attitudes. UWAAC considers technological fluency, information literacy, quantitative ability, and

global awareness as essential knowledge and skill sets that underpin several ULCs; they therefore do not require separate ULCs. They are tools required to demonstrate proficiency with ULCs and may be evaluated by programs as part of one or more ULCs as appropriate to that program.

Taking into consideration the above research, UWAAC recommends Winthrop University faculty approve the following ULCs during the 2010-2011 academic year. For each competency, we provide the competency statement, an elaborative description, and potential strategy/assessment examples.

Competency 1: Winthrop graduates think critically and solve problems.

Winthrop University graduates reason logically, evaluate and use evidence, and solve problems. They seek out and assess relevant information from multiple viewpoints to form well-reasoned conclusions. Winthrop graduates consider the full context and consequences of their decisions and continually reexamine their own critical thinking process, including the strengths and weaknesses of their arguments.

Strategy/Assessment examples:
- Reflect on and evaluate the creative/ critical thinking process
- Design and implement a means to gather and interpret new information
- Analyze evidence, including primary and secondary research
- Use evidence and/or logical reasoning to draw conclusions and evaluate claims
- Use quantitative reasoning skills, including evaluating numerical data and interpreting graphical displays

Competency 2: Winthrop graduates are personally and socially responsible.

Winthrop University graduates value integrity, perceive moral dimensions, and achieve excellence They take seriously the perspectives of others, practice ethical reasoning, and reflect on experiences. Winthrop graduates have a sense of responsibility to the broader community and contribute to the greater good.

Strategy/Assessment examples:
- Read, discuss, and explore solutions to ethical dilemmas
- Consider how academic work relates to diverse social and personal perspectives
- Reflect on service-learning and community engagement experiences
- Investigate issues of inequity (in opportunity, services, education, etc.)
- Practice integrity in academic, professional, and personal lives

Competency 3: Winthrop graduates understand the interconnected nature of the world and the time in which they live.

Winthrop University graduates comprehend the historical, social, and global contexts of their disciplines and their lives. They also recognize how their chosen area of study is inextricably linked to other fields. Winthrop graduates collaborate with members of diverse academic, professional, and cultural communities as informed and engaged citizens.

Strategy/Assessment examples:
- Explain the relationships within and/or between the physical and natural world
- Analyze texts and/or discuss issues from diverse perspectives, past and present
- Reflect on how a discipline fits within a broader field of study
- Examine the interconnections and interdependencies among nations, cultures, and geographic regions
- Explore historical and social contexts for evolution of a specific discipline

Competency 4: Winthrop graduates communicate effectively.

Winthrop University graduates communicate in a manner appropriate to the subject, occasion, and audience. They create texts – including but not limited to written, oral, and visual presentations – that convey content effectively. Mindful of their voice and the impact of their communication, Winthrop graduates successfully express and exchange ideas.

Strategy/Assessment examples:
- Create a thesis-driven response (arguing for a position on a key issue, reporting factual information, critiquing one's own or others' positions)
- Develop and deliver an oral presentation to a specific audience
- Create and/or present an artistic work (a musical performance, gallery installation, a critique of their work, an acting or dance experience)
- Use visual media effectively (charts, non-print sources, advertising, portfolio) as part of a text or presentation
- Employ appropriate technical language to support conclusions and/or propositions

V. Suggestions for Future Design and Use of Assessment Strategies and Data

Assumptions and Goals of ULC Assessment

The development of Winthrop University's ULCs is the first step in a larger process to meet two main goals. First, the development and university-wide assessment of ULCs allows Winthrop University to evaluate student progress toward developing "the ability

to communicate effectively, appreciate diversity, work collaboratively, synthesize knowledge, solve complex problems and adapt to change" (Winthrop University Catalog, 2010, p. 1) and to document that progress to stakeholders (faculty, students, legislature, SACS, etc.). Second, establishing a system for ongoing assessment of ULCs provides a structure to improve student learning across all programs of study.

Best Practices

In order for ULCs to become an effective tool for measuring institutional academic success and for improving undergraduate education, Winthrop University must build upon existing successful assessment strategies and implement new ones where needed. This section outlines common features of successful assessment efforts and makes several recommendations for how specific academic programs might craft their individual assessment plans. Winthrop University's Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide (IAPG; Winthrop University, *n.d.*) contains more comprehensive information, recommendations, and resources for assessment.

There is no perfect assessment. However, successful assessment programs share several important features (see Chapter 3 and Appendix C & D in the IAPG). They begin by aligning the assessment goals with institutional goals (Banta, Jones, & Black, 2009; Erwin, 1991) and proceed from that foundation to assess outcomes using multiple assessment methods (Middaugh, 2010; Suskie, 2009) administered at multiple times (Suskie, 2009), making students aware of learning objectives and providing them with feedback on their progress toward those goals.

Academic programs should first identify where students encounter the ULCs in the program of study and identify two or three points of measurement: at least one early in the program and one near the end of the program, with any additional points midway through the program. Assessing at multiple points accomplishes two goals. First, it reinforces the importance of the ULCs to students and provides them with feedback regarding their progress toward those competencies. Second, it allows programs to improve and demonstrate value-added educational effectiveness (Astin, 1993).

Multiple assessment methods are needed if programs are to assess both demonstrable knowledge and skills and more intangible factors such as attitudes and habits of mind (Middaugh, 2010). A combination of direct measures of student knowledge and skills (student work or test results) and indirect measures of attitudes and habits of mind (e.g., reflections or surveys) is necessary (see Chapter 3 and Appendix C & C in the IAPG; see also Maki, 2004). While standardized measures are available for many areas, no single test can assess all ULCs in all areas. Furthermore, academic programs differ greatly in

their execution of ULC education and have additional SLOs that would be best served by an integrated assessment plan tailored to address all of the needs of the program.

Assessment is an empty process if the results are not used to improve educational practice and inform institutional policy (see Chapter 3 in the IAPG). In order to close the loop, assessment results *must* be used to guide curriculum development at the program level and improve student support services and policy decisions at the university level (Astin, 1993; Banta et al., 2009; Bresciani, 2007; Suskie, 2009). This means that effective assessment must yield interpretable data in a timely manner. It also means that assessment data from program-level and university-wide assessment must be integrated in order to create a holistic picture of student attainment and to evaluate the adequacy of program goals, learning objectives, and assessment strategies.

Broad-based involvement and support from students, faculty, and administration is critical for valid and reliable assessment (Erwin, 1991). Students *must* recognize that assessment matters and is a means to improve education and educational-related outcomes such as employability (Suskie, 2009). Data gathered under conditions when students do not care (low-stakes assessment) is not reliable (Suskie, 2009). The assessment process presents an opportunity to improve student satisfaction by demonstrating institutional commitment to instructional improvement and enhancing the college experience. Faculty must also understand that effective assessment is a data-driven process requiring consistent and systematic execution. Administration and support services must recognize that proper assessment *requires significant resources* from academic support services to significant faculty time in order to design, implement, report, and improve assessment (Banta et al., 2009).

Successful assessment improves student learning and demonstrates *institutional* effectiveness (or highlights areas for improvement).

Suggestions for Successful Implementation and Assessment of ULCs across the University

Significant resources will be required to incorporate and assess ULCs successfully across all academic programs. While most programs already address the majority of ULCs in some form, some programs may need to update their goals and SLOs to be consistent with the ULCs. Academic programs will need to develop and implement a comprehensive assessment strategy across the program of study. Furthermore, this assessment strategy must be ongoing, meaning that ULC assessment will require substantial resources up front as well as support for recurring assessment efforts. Because assessment strategies will vary by program, no definitive list of necessary

resources is available at this time. Furthermore, the list of suggestions below is not intended to replace assessment of courses, instructors, or other program, college, or university objectives. Successful ULC assessment will require broad-based support and involvement from faculty in and out of the classroom. The following suggests possible resources to ensure that ULCs are successfully implemented and assessed:

- **Support for faculty assessment leaders.** This may include release time or summer pay for faculty in charge of assessment within a program.
- **Credit for faculty assessment leaders.** Faculty involved in assessment should receive credit in teaching, service, and scholarship as appropriate (see IAGP Appendix E for specific recommendations).
- **Increased support for the development of new assessment protocols and/or instruments.** This may take the form of increased funds to purchase standardized assessments; increasing the scope and the amount available for internal grants; support for faculty travel to assessment workshops; and/or inviting external experts to conduct workshops or assist development of assessment materials and procedures.
- **Establishment and maintenance of shared repositories at the program, department, college, and university level.** This may include online shared drives (password protected if they are to include assessment data) and materials libraries (e.g., assessment instruments and data, sample rubrics, scholarly articles, books, etc.). Shared repositories will also require routine upkeep and may necessitate additional training for faculty or staff (e.g., how to maintain and access a shared drive).
- **Establishment of college-level assessment committees.** These committees should serve in an advisory capacity by reviewing assessment plans and providing feedback on those plans, but they should also have the authority to approve or disapprove assessment plans.
- **Designated college-level Assessment Liaisons.** Assessment Liaisons are responsible to the appropriate dean or vice president for the oversight of college or division assessment plans and reports. They serve as college-level advisors and facilitators to units engaged in assessment processes and serve on college-level assessment committees and the UWAAC.
- **Support for collecting, analyzing, and reporting assessment data.** Some programs may require assistance from outside the program to successfully gather, analyze, interpret, report, and utilize assessment data. This support might come internally (i.e., AAAS, UWAAC, other colleges, etc.) or externally.
- **Adoption of a university-wide standardized assessment in a manner that permits the data to be related to each academic program.** As part of Winthrop's involvement in the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), writing and critical thinking will be assessed across all programs using a standardized measure. The data for these competencies, as well as other data relevant to the program (e.g., math ability to the Math department) should be returned to programs in a timely fashion so that those results can be combined with locally produced data.

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VII. Glossary of Terms

AAAS:	Department of Accreditation, Accountability, and Academic Services
AAC&U:	Association of American of Colleges and Universities
AAHE:	American Association for Higher Education
Formative Assessment:	Assessment that centers on measurements applied early and throughout an undergraduate program
General Education Goals:	Original goals for Winthrop University's General Education curriculum, as developed and approved by the Winthrop faculty in 1984. They are now known as the Student Goals in the Touchstone Program
HSAP:	High School Assessment Program
IAPG:	Winthrop University's Institutional Assessment Plan and Guide
LEAP:	The Liberal Education and America's Promise
Liberal Education:	A philosophy of education that empowers individuals with broad knowledge and transferable skills and cultivates social responsibility and a strong sense of ethics and values
NACE:	National Association of Colleges and Employers
NAEP:	National Assessment of Educational Progress
PASS:	Palmetto Assessment of State Standards
SACS:	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

SHRM: The Society for Human Resource Managers

SLOs: Student Learning Outcomes

Summative Assessment: Assessment that centers on measurements applied to students at completion of their undergraduate curriculum

Touchstone Core: First four courses— ACAD 101 (Principles of the Learning Academy), Writing 101 (Introduction to Academic Discourse), HMXP 102 (The Human Experience), and CRTW 201 (Critical Reading, Thinking, and Writing)—of the Touchstone Program

Touchstone Program: New General Education Curriculum, including Touchstone Core and skill set requirements, as approved by the faculty on April 19, 2002

ULCs: University-Level Competencies

UWAAC: University-Wide Academic Assessment Committee

VSA: Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)