Proposed Revisions to the General Education Program

It has become apparent over the last two years of implementing the current general education program that there are issues with the current process. Pilot reports on assessment in general education courses were collected during the 2007-2008 academic year and reports for all general education courses were submitted in Fall 2008. Based on a cursory review of reports and conversations with many faculty participating in the assessments and reports, it appears that the current assessments – mostly embedded questions on final exams – are measuring course content mastery rather than ensuring students are demonstrating achievement of a common set of general education competencies.

Under the current plan, writing a comprehensive report on each goal will require integration of disparate data from all of the reports for a particular goal and gleaning meaning from the data in order to demonstrate achievement. The process of integrating all of the material received in the reports to demonstrate that the broader competencies have been met will be a daunting, and possibly impossible, task. Additionally, after review of much of the data, it appears that the information as collected does not provide the institution with the information necessary to make changes or modify general education to assure that our graduates have the skills that they need.

Therefore, the General Education Committee proposes that USC Upstate move to a broad based general education competency model.

Explanation of Competency Based General Education

In his response to the question, “What is General Education?”, Professor A.J. Mandt of Wichita State University explains,

The business of a university is knowledge. Not only does a university teach practical knowledge, it creates new knowledge. General education introduces students to this higher conception of knowledge and shows them how to make it their own. It teaches them the nature, significance, and means of acquiring knowledge—not just a little know-how in one subject or a single useful skill, but a range of knowledge that is as broad as human experience itself. That is why this sort of education is called general education.
A competency based general education program serves this overarching purpose of general education—to collect and evaluate information (acquire knowledge), integrate and draw conclusions from this information (create knowledge), and communicate this new knowledge to others—providing students with the skills and abilities necessary to becoming responsible citizens. A competency based system is predicated on outcome-based education (OBE) and the concept of focusing and organizing learning around what is essential for all students to be able to do successfully at the end of their learning experiences. In general education, those competencies should be broad based and serve as the foundational and supporting skills on which the majors can build rather than a collection of course content specific knowledge strung together.

Structure of Proposed General Education Program

In the proposed model, the University would move from eight goals and 23 learning outcomes to five competencies with nine specific learning outcomes.

**Proposed Competencies and SLOs**

Competency 1: The USC Upstate graduate should demonstrate an ability to communicate in English, both orally and in writing.

1.1 Students are able to create and deliver coherent, grammatically correct oral presentations.

1.2 Students are able to create coherent, grammatically correct written responses to prompts and questions.

Competency 2: The USC Upstate graduate should demonstrate an understanding of and an ability to apply scientific investigation and quantitative and logical reasoning.

2.1 Students demonstrate an ability to apply scientific reasoning by drawing appropriate conclusions from scientific data.

2.2 Students demonstrate an ability to apply quantitative and logical reasoning by producing solutions to or analyses of appropriate problems.

Competency 3: The USC Upstate graduate should be able to integrate and critically evaluate information.

3.1 Students are able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of varying points of view.

3.2 Students demonstrate the ability to distinguish between pertinent and irrelevant information.
Competency 4: The USC Upstate graduate should understand and demonstrate an awareness of distinctive features of language and cultures.
   4.1 Students demonstrate knowledge of linguistic and cultural diversity and contributions of such diversity to society.

Competency 5: The USC Upstate graduate should demonstrate responsible and appropriate use of information technologies.
   5.1 Students are able to gather and correctly process information through appropriate use of technological tools.
   5.2 Students demonstrate the ability to use information technologies to communicate information to others.

Alignment of Courses to Competencies

The distribution of courses required of all students will remain the same for the proposed model. The same number of semester hours of courses will be required in the same combinations of options as under the current program. (See attachment 1.)

However, with the creation of five competencies, departments will be required to select the competencies each of their General Education courses will support. All courses in the distribution must support at least two of the new competencies. Support means contributing to at least one (1) SLO (Student Learning Outcome) within the competency. Courses that are grouped together in the course distribution need not necessarily support the same competency.

For example, since there will no longer be a specific goal for social/behavioral sciences, the Psychology and Sociology faculties will decide independently which competencies they will support. The Psychology faculty might choose to align Psychology 101 with Competencies 3 and 4. By supporting these competencies, they agree that, as they teach their course content, they will support student learning aimed at engaging students in cultural awareness and integrating and critically evaluating information. The Sociology faculty, however, might choose to align Sociology 101 with Competencies 1 and 5. By supporting these competencies, they agree that, as they teach their course content, they will support student learning aimed at improving communication skills and the responsible and appropriate use of information technologies.

New courses, or courses not currently included in the General Education course distribution, that wish to be included in the distribution will submit a rationale for their
inclusion to the General Education Committee for approval. Only 100- and 200-level courses will be considered for addition to the course distribution.

**Assessment of Proposed General Education Program**

The general education committee is also proposing common assessments for each competency. These assessments will be administered in a cycle with sample populations assessed for each competency and related outcomes. (Attachment 2 outlines the proposed assessments, although these can be changed by the competency teams described later in this proposal.) At present, Senior Seminar courses will continue as the main assessment venue, although the General Education Committee will continue to investigate other options for administration. Senior Seminar courses will be randomly assigned to multiple groups each semester, with each group participating in a different assessment. For example, the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) Writing Essay Test, the CAAP Science Test, and the Measure of Academic Progress and Proficiency (MAPP) might all be administered in one semester and the ACT iSkills and the Intercultural Development Inventory might both be administered in another. By doing so, each competency will be assessed each year.

In addition to these direct measures of assessment, indirect assessment will be achieved through the Graduate Surveys (administered annually to all graduates by Institutional Research, Assessment, and Planning [IRAP]) and Alumni Surveys (administered every two years by IRAP).

Faculty representatives from units teaching courses that support a specific competency will join to create a “competency team”. Additionally, a member of the General Education Committee will chair each competency team. These teams will be charged with:

- Determining if the assessments are indeed measuring the competency accurately.
- Developing internal assessments that are more reflective of the intent of the competencies to replace or support existing assessment (if deemed necessary).
- Reviewing assessment data and providing the data to units offering courses supporting the competency.
- Providing units with suggestions of improvement measures if benchmarks are not met.
- Reporting improvement measures from units to the General Education Committee.
*Closing the Loop*

Assessment data will be provided to the faculty through the competency teams. If benchmarks for a competency are not met, units teaching courses aligned with the competency agree to respond to improvement suggestions developed by the competency team. The competency teams will compile improvement measures and submit them to the General Education Committee for consideration. Units teaching courses aligned with the competency will implement approved measures to improve student abilities. The General Education Committee will compile all relevant information to create annual University reports on the General Education program.
Attachment 1

Approved General Education Courses, Effective Fall 2007

The Committee recommends that only courses numbered less than 300 be allowed to serve as general education courses. (30 October 2008)

I. Communication
   SEGL101 and SEGL102 6
   SSPH 201 3

II. Mathematics and Logic
   One math course 3
   SMTH 102, 120, 121, 122, 126, 127, 141, 142, 231
   One course from math, logic or statistics 3
   SECO 291; SLGC 205, 207; SMTH 102, 120, 121, 122, 126, 127, 141, 142, 202, 231; SPSY 225; SSOC 201

III. Information Technology
   SCSC138, 150; SIMS 101

IV. Natural Science
   2 courses from the following (at least one with the associated lab) 7-8
   SAST 111/L; SBIO 101/L, 102/L, 110/L, 206, 240, 242/L, 270; SCHM 101/L, 105, 106, 107, 109/L, 111/L, 112/L;
   SGEG 201/L, 202; SGEL 101/L, 102/L, 103/L, 120, 121, 123/L, 131; SPHS 101/L, 201/L, 202/L, 211/L, 212/L

V. Arts and Humanities
   1 fine arts course 6
   SAAS 204 SATH 101, 105, 106; SMUS 110, 140; STHE 161, 170;
   1 course from the following: (no more than 3 credit hours from a specific discipline)
   SAAS 204; SAMS 101, 102; SEGL 250, 275, 279, 280,
   283, 289, 290, 291; SEGL 252; SFLM 240; SPHL 102, 211; SREL103;
   STHE 161, 170;

VI. Foreign Language and Culture
   Foreign Language minimum 102 level 3
   SFRN 102; SGRM 102; SSPN 102

VII. History
   SHST 101, SHST 102, SHST 105, or SHST 106 3

VIII. Social and Behavioral Sciences
   2 courses from the following with two disciplines represented: 6
   SANT 102; SAAS 201; SECO 221, 222; SGEG 101,103;
   SGIS 201, 301, 320; SPSY 101; SSOC 101; SWST 101;

September 2008
Attachment 2

Competency 1: The USC Upstate graduate should demonstrate an ability to communicate in English, both orally and in writing.

1.1 Students are able to create and deliver coherent, grammatically correct oral presentations.

- Assessment rubric in SSPH 201 (to be developed)
- Assessment rubric for Senior Seminars (to be developed)

1.2 Students are able to create coherent, grammatically correct written responses to prompts and questions.

- CAAP Writing Essay Test (http://www.act.org/caap/tests/essay.html)
  The CAAP Writing Essay Test is predicated on the assumption that the skills most commonly taught in college-level writing courses and required in upper-division college courses across the curriculum include:
  - Formulating an assertion about a given issue
  - Supporting that assertion with evidence appropriate to the issue, position taken, and a given audience
  - Organizing and connecting major ideas
  - Expressing those ideas in clear, effective language

**CAPP Scoring**

**Upper-range papers**
These papers clearly engage the issue identified in the prompt and demonstrate superior skill in organizing, developing, and conveying in standard written English the writer’s ideas about the topic.

6--Exceptional. These papers take a position on the issue defined in the prompt and support that position with extensive elaboration. Organization is unified and coherent. While there may be a few errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure, outstanding command of the language is apparent.

5--Superior. These papers take a position on the issue defined in the prompt and support that position with moderate elaboration. Organization is unified and coherent. While there may be a few errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure, command of the language is apparent.

**Mid-range papers**
Papers in the middle range demonstrate engagement with the issue identified in the prompt but do not demonstrate the evidence of writing skill that would mark them as outstanding.

4--Competent. These papers take a position on the issue defined in the prompt and support that position with some elaboration or explanation. Organization is generally clear. A competency with language is apparent,
even though there may be some errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure.

**3--Adequate.** These papers take a position on the issue defined in the prompt and support that position but with only a little elaboration or explanation. Organization is clear enough to follow without difficulty. A control of the language is apparent, even though there may be numerous errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure.

**Lower-range papers**

Papers in the lower range fail in some way to demonstrate proficiency in language use, clarity of organization, or engagement of the issue identified in the prompt.

**2--Weak.** While these papers take a position on the issue defined in the prompt, they may show significant problems in one or more of several areas, making the writer's ideas often difficult to follow: support may be extremely minimal; organization may lack clear movement or connectedness; or there may be a pattern of errors in mechanics, usage, or sentence structure that significantly interferes with understanding the writer's ideas.

**1--Inadequate.** These papers show a failed attempt to engage the issue defined in the prompt, lack support, or have problems with organization or language so severe as to make the writer's ideas very difficult to follow.
Competency 2: The USC Upstate graduate should demonstrate an understanding of and an ability to apply scientific investigation and quantitative and logical reasoning.

2.1 Students demonstrate an ability to apply scientific reasoning by drawing appropriate conclusions from scientific data.

CAAP Science Test (http://www.act.org/caap/tests/science.html)

The test consists of eight passage sets, each of which contains scientific information and a set of multiple-choice test questions. A passage may conform to one of the three different formats listed below.

**Data Representation.** This format presents students with graphic and tabular material similar to that found in science journals and texts. The items associated with this format measures skills such as graph reading, interpretation of scatterplots, and interpretation of information presented in tables, diagrams, and figures.

**Research Summaries.** This format provides students with descriptions of one experiment or of several related experiments. The items focus on the design of experiments and the interpretation of experimental results. The stimulus and items are written expressly for the Science Test, and all relevant information is completely presented in the text of the stimulus or in the test questions.

**Conflicting Viewpoints.** This format presents students with several hypotheses or views that are mutually inconsistent owing to differing premises, incomplete or disputed data, or differing interpretations of data. The stimuli may include illustrative charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, or figures. Items in this format measure students' skills in understanding, analyzing, and comparing alternative viewpoints or hypotheses.

The 45 test items in the Science Test can be conceptualized in three major groups. Each group is meant to address an important major element of scientific inquiry. The groups are listed below, along with brief descriptions of typical knowledge and skills tested.

**Understanding.** Identify and evaluate scientific concepts, assumptions, and components of an experimental design or process; identify and evaluate data presented in graphs, figures, or tables; translate given data into an alternate form.

**Analyzing.** Process information needed to draw conclusions or to formulate hypotheses; determine whether information provided supports a given hypothesis or conclusion; evaluate, compare, and contrast experimental designs or viewpoints; specify alternative ways of testing hypotheses or viewpoints.

**Generalizing.** Extend information given to a broader or different context; generate a model consistent with given information; develop new procedures to gain new information; use given information to predict outcomes.
2.2 Students demonstrate an ability to apply quantitative and logical reasoning by producing solutions to or analyses of appropriate problems.

MAPP -- Mathematics Skill Area (www.ets.org/mapp)

Level I
Students who are proficient can:
- solve word problems that would most likely be solved by arithmetic and do not involve conversion of units or proportionality. These problems can be multi-step if the steps are repeated rather than embedded.
- solve problems involving the informal properties of numbers and operations, often involving the Number Line, including positive and negative numbers, whole numbers and fractions (including conversions of common fractions to percent, such as converting "1/4" to 25%)
- solve problems requiring a general understanding of square roots and the squares of numbers
- solve a simple equation or substitute numbers into an algebraic expression
- find information from a graph. This task may involve finding a specified piece of information in a graph that also contains other information.

Level II
Students who are proficient can:
- solve arithmetic problems with some complications, such as complex wording, maximizing or minimizing, and embedded ratios. These problems include algebra problems that can be solved by arithmetic (the answer choices are numeric).
- simplify algebraic expressions, perform basic translations, and draw conclusions from algebraic equations and inequalities. These tasks are more complicated than solving a simple equation, though they may be approached arithmetically by substituting numbers.
- interpret a trend represented in a graph, or choose a graph that reflects a trend
- solve problems involving sets; problems have numeric answer choices

Level III
Students who are proficient can:
- solve word problems that would be unlikely to be solved by arithmetic; the answer choices are either algebraic expressions or numbers that do not lend themselves to back-solving
- solve problems involving difficult arithmetic concepts such as exponents and roots other than squares and square roots and percent of increase or decrease
- generalize about numbers, (e.g., identify the values of \(x\) for which an expression increases as \(x\) increases)
- solve problems requiring an understanding of the properties of integers, rational numbers, etc.
• interpret a graph in which the trends are to be expressed algebraically or one of the following is involved: exponents and roots other than squares and square roots, percent of increase or decrease
• solve problems requiring insight or logical reasoning

**Competency 3: The USC Upstate graduate should be able to integrate and critically evaluate information.**

**3.1 Students are able to evaluate strengths and weaknesses of varying points of view.**

**3.2 Students demonstrate the ability to distinguish between pertinent and irrelevant information.**

**MAPP -- Reading/Critical Thinking Skill Area** ([www.ets.org/mapp](http://www.ets.org/mapp))

**Level I**
Students who are proficient can:
- recognize factual material explicitly presented in a reading passage
- understand the meaning of particular words or phrases in the context of a reading passage

**Level II**
Students who are proficient can:
- synthesize material from different sections of a passage
- recognize valid inferences derived from material in the passage
- identify accurate summaries of a passage or of significant sections of the passage
- understand and interpret figurative language
- discern the main idea, purpose or focus of a passage or a significant portion of the passage

**Level III**
Students who are proficient can:
- evaluate competing causal explanations
- evaluate hypotheses for consistency with known facts
- determine the relevance of information for evaluating an argument or conclusion
- determine whether an artistic interpretation is supported by evidence contained in a work
- recognize the salient features or themes in a work of art
- evaluate the appropriateness of procedures for investigating a question of causation
- evaluate data for consistency with known facts, hypotheses or methods
- recognize flaws and inconsistencies in an argument
**Competency 4: The USC Upstate graduate should understand and demonstrate an awareness of distinctive features of language and cultures.**

4.1 Students demonstrate knowledge of linguistic and cultural diversity and contributions of such diversity to society.

**The Intercultural Development Inventory**
(http://www.mdbgroupinc.com/idi_background.html)
- The IDI tests sensitivity, worldview, acceptance, adaptation, similarity, behavioral avoidance, denial and defense.
- The DD Scale measures a worldview that simplifies and/or polarizes cultural difference. This orientation ranges from a tendency toward disinterest and avoidance of cultural difference to a tendency to view the work in terms of “us” and “them” where “us” is superior.
- The R Scale measures a worldview that reverses the “us” and “them” polarization, where “them” is superior.
- The M Scale measures a worldview that highlights cultural commonality and universal values through an emphasis on similarity and/or universalism.
- The AA Scale measures a worldview that can comprehend and accommodate complex cultural difference. This can range from acceptance to adaptation.
- The EM Scale measures a worldview that incorporates a multicultural identity with confused cultural perspectives. EM measures encapsulated marginality, which is one of the two theorized aspects of a broader development worldview called “Integration.”
**Competency 5: The USC Upstate graduate should demonstrate responsible and appropriate use of information technologies.**

5.1 Students gather and correctly process information through appropriate use of technological tools.

5.2 Students demonstrate the ability to use information technologies to communicate information to others.

ACT iSkills (www.ets.org/iskills)

**Technology Topics**
- Web Use – E-mail, Instant Messaging, Bulletin Board Postings, Browser Use, Search Engines
- Database Management – Data Searches, File Management
- Software – Word Processing, Spreadsheet, Presentations, Graphics

A clear understanding of how your students perform on each of the 7 ICT literacy proficiencies helps you identify where further curriculum development is needed to help your students succeed.

1. **Define**
   1. Know how to articulate a need for and determine where to locate information
   2. Create a research topic to fit a particular information need or complete a concept map

2. **Access**
   1. Search and collect information from the Internet and databases
   2. Read and refine a search to locate resources

3. **Evaluate**
   1. Assess the relevancy, veracity and completeness of information for a specific purpose
   2. Select the best database to use and determine the sufficiency of information on a website for a particular need

4. **Manage**
   1. Develop and use a comprehensive organizational scheme
   2. Document relationships using an organizational chart and sort e-mails into appropriate folders

5. **Integrate**
   1. Synthesize, summarize, compare and draw conclusions from information from multiple sources
   2. Compare and contrast information from web pages or a spreadsheet and synthesize information from instant messages into a word processing document

6. **Create**
   1. Generate information by adapting and critically analyzing current data
   2. Create a graph that supports a point of view. Select text and graphics to communicate the point of view
7. **Communicate**

   1. Convey information persuasively to various audiences using the right medium
   2. Be able to adapt presentation slides and revise an e-mail