Memorandum

To: Faculty Senate

From: Tom Tripp, Chair, General Education Committee, & Mary Wack, Vice Provost, Office of Undergraduate Education

Re: Update of the Six Learning Goals of the Baccalaureate

Date: August 20th, 2010

Dear Senate Colleagues,

The attached materials update the Six Learning Goals of the Baccalaureate, which were affirmed by the Senate in 2005. We request the Faculty Senate to adopt these changes.

The intent of the updating is to provide a single set of broad, flexible undergraduate goals to guide curriculum and assessment, whether in general education or in the major. This version comes forward with the endorsements of the Teaching Academy (attached), the Provost’s Office and the General Education Committee.

There are several reasons for updating undergraduate learning goals at this time:

- The various groups and committees involved in revising general education agree that the multiple sets of goals now in circulation (the Six Goals, the General Education goals, the former Vancouver General Education goals, the “student-friendly” goals, and various other permutations now in existence) needed to be synthesized into a single set. The multiple sets of goals now in circulation have created confusion for faculty as to which goals govern which activities.

- The goals for a general education should not be different from the goals for undergraduate education or education in a major, which many people at WSU perceive them to be. New regional accreditation standards more clearly articulate the necessity of identifying student learning goals at every level, from individual course syllabi to institutional assessment of general education and of degree programs. The new standards are found at: www.nwccu.org.

- Finally, as the revision of the general education curriculum moves ahead with increasing speed, it is critically important that faculty agree on the major goals and outcomes of
undergraduate education before committing to a new curriculum, since requirements flow from the intended goals and outcomes.

Faculty—especially those who have been involved in their department’s assessment processes—may ask: “What’s the difference in these goals, and what will it do to the assessment that we just got in place?” The answer is that four of the six goals are substantially unchanged; these are the “mom and apple pie” (and state-mandated) goals of critical thinking, communication, quantitative reasoning and information literacy. Note that the numbered elaborations on the longer version (“For instance. . .”) are more specific examples of outcome statements, which faculty can adopt (or adapt) at the course or major level. These specific examples should prove more helpful in guiding course and activity design, and in guiding assessment, than the previous bullets under the Six Goals. Faculty may also formulate specific course-related outcome statements for each goal, as long as they are logical manifestations of that goal.

The two goals that were reworded are “Self in Society” and “Specialty.” “Self in Society” has proved in practice too broad and confusing of a goal statement. It has been reworded to “Intercultural and Civic Engagement” to reflect more clearly the recognition that one of the 21st-century skills graduates must have is an ability to think, act, and interact in multiple, diverse contexts, whether of persons, cultures, ecologies, perspectives, knowledge claims, or other dimensions of past and present.

“Specialty” was reworded to “Depth, Breadth and Integration of Learning” to reflect explicitly the fact that a baccalaureate education requires breadth and integration as well as depth. This revision is intended to bring all of baccalaureate learning into the same framework, to reduce the perceived opposition between general education and the major that “specialty” created. For instance, many faculty perceived that the first five learning goals were for General Education while the last goal, Specialty, was for the majors. This revision also recognizes WSU’s unique history and status as an engaged university (our Carnegie designation in addition to very high research status), and the many opportunities already in place for students to apply their learning within professional and community contexts.

The changes to both of these goals should not undercut any department’s assessment efforts, as the changes are clarifications and refinements of existing goals. The intended outcome of all the changes is to provide a clearer and more helpful framework for teaching, learning, and assessment.
WSU LEARNING GOALS

CRITICAL & CREATIVE THINKING

Graduates will use evidence and context to construct knowledge in order to reason, including reasoning ethically, and to innovate in imaginative ways.

QUANTITATIVE REASONING

Graduates will solve quantitative problems from a wide variety of authentic contexts and everyday life situations.

INFORMATION LITERACY

Graduates will effectively identify, locate, evaluate, use responsibly and share information for the problem at hand.

COMMUNICATION

Graduates will write, speak and listen to achieve intended meaning and understanding among all participants.

INTERCULTURAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Graduates will employ self-understanding and interact effectively with others of similar and diverse cultures, values, and perspectives.

DEPTH, BREADTH, AND INTEGRATION OF LEARNING

Graduates will develop depth, breadth, and integration of learning for the benefit of themselves, their communities, their employers, and for society at large.
WSU LEARNING GOALS WITH EXAMPLES OF OUTCOMES

CRITICAL & CREATIVE THINKING

Graduates will use evidence and context to construct knowledge in order to reason, including reasoning ethically, and to innovate in imaginative ways.

For instance, graduates can demonstrate critical and creative thinking by their ability to:
1. Define, analyze, and solve problems.
2. Integrate and synthesize knowledge from multiple sources.
3. Assess the accuracy and validity of findings and conclusions.
4. Understand how one thinks, reasons, and makes value judgments, including ethical and aesthetical judgments.
5. Understand diverse viewpoints, including different philosophical and cultural perspectives.
6. Combine and synthesize existing ideas, images, or expertise in original ways.
7. Think, react, and work in an imaginative way characterized by a high degree of innovation, divergent thinking, and risk taking.

QUANTITATIVE REASONING

Graduates will solve quantitative problems from a wide variety of authentic contexts and everyday life situations.

For instance, graduates can demonstrate quantitative reasoning by their ability to:
1. Explain information presented in mathematical forms (e.g., equations, graphs, diagrams, tables, and words).
2. Convert relevant information into various mathematical forms (e.g., equations, graphs, diagrams, tables, and words).
3. Understand and apply quantitative principles and methods in the solution of problems.
4. Make judgments and draw appropriate conclusions based on the quantitative analysis of data, while recognizing the limits of this analysis.
5. Identify and evaluate important assumptions in estimation, modeling, and data analysis.
6. Express quantitative evidence in support of the argument or purpose of work (in terms of what evidence is used and how it is formatted, presented, and contextualized).

INFORMATION LITERACY

Graduates will effectively identify, locate, evaluate, use responsibly and share information for the problem at hand.

For instance, graduates can demonstrate information literacy by their ability to:
1. Determine the extent and type of information needed.
2. Implement well-designed search strategies.
3. Access information effectively and efficiently from multiple sources.
4. Assess credibility and applicability of information sources.
5. Use information to accomplish a specific purpose.
6. Access and use information ethically and legally.
COMMUNICATION

Graduates will write, speak and listen to achieve intended meaning and understanding among all participants.

For instance, graduates can demonstrate the ability to:
1. Recognize how circumstances, background, values, interests and needs shape communication sent and received.
2. Tailor message to the audience.
3. Express concepts propositions and beliefs in coherent, concise and technically correct form.
4. Choose appropriate communication medium and technology.
5. Speak with comfort in front of groups.
6. Follow social norms for individual and small group interactions, which includes listening actively.

INTERCULTURAL AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Graduates will employ self-understanding and interact effectively with others of similar and diverse cultures, values, and perspectives.

For instance, graduates can demonstrate intercultural and civic engagement by their ability to:
1. Critically assess their own core values, cultural assumptions and biases in relation to those held by other individuals, cultures, and societies.
2. Recognize how events & patterns in the present and past structure and affect human societies and world ecologies.
3. Critically assess the cultural and social underpinnings of knowledge claims.
4. Actively seek opportunities to learn from diverse perspectives.
5. Practice personal integrity, citizenship, and service to others.

DEPTH, BREADTH, AND INTEGRATION OF LEARNING

Graduates will develop depth, breadth, and integration of learning for the benefit of themselves, their communities, their employers, and for society at large.

For instance, graduates can demonstrate depth, breadth, and integration of learning:

1. Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts.
2. By showing a depth of knowledge within the chosen academic field of study based on integration of its history, core methods, techniques, vocabulary, and unsolved problems.
3. By applying the concepts of the general and specialized studies to personal, academic, service learning, professional, and/or community activities.
4. By understanding how the methods and concepts of the chosen discipline relate to those of other disciplines and by possessing the ability to engage in cross-disciplinary activities.
August 20, 2010

Faculty Senate
Washington State University
Pullman, WA

Dear Faculty Senate Members:

On behalf of the Teaching Academy of Washington State University, I am pleased to extend the Teaching Academy’s unanimous endorsement of the General Education (GE) Committee’s proposed revision to the WSU learning goals.

The Teaching Academy was the driving body in establishing the original learning goals in 2004. Most of the faculty members involved at that time are still members of the Teaching Academy. Some of them, along with several newer Academy members, worked this spring to provide recommendations to the GE Committee for updates to the learning goals. The GE Committee worked over the summer to fine-tune those recommendations further.

The Teaching Academy members who responded to the final GE Committee proposal were all strongly supportive of it. We hope that the Faculty Senate will approve the proposal so that the work of General Education reform based on those learning goals can begin soon.

Sincerely,

Chuck Munson
Associate Professor and WSU Teaching Academy Chair