

Western Michigan University General Education Program

A. Our program is essentially the cafeteria distribution model. It is broken down into four Proficiencies and eight Distribution Areas. Students must take one course from each of the Proficiency and Distribution Areas.

The four Proficiencies are:

- 1 - College Level Writing (basic English composition)
- 2 - Baccalaureate Level Writing (writing course within the major)
- 3 - College Level Mathematics or Quantitative Reasoning
- 4 - Enhance or Develop a Proficiency: This includes areas like advanced writing, advanced mathematics or quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, oral communication, computer science and a foreign language.

The eight Distribution Areas include:

- I - Fine Arts
- II - Humanities
- III - The United States: Cultures and Issues
- IV - Other Cultures and Civilizations
- V - Social and Behavioral Sciences
- VI - Natural Science with a Lab
- VII - Natural Science and Technology: Applications and Implications
- VIII - Health and Well-being

The courses a student chooses to take must equal or exceed 37 credit hours. This credit hour total does not include the credit hours of the baccalaureate level writing course (Proficiency 2). In addition, a student must take at least two courses within the general education curriculum at the upper (junior or senior) level. The baccalaureate writing course does not count for one of the two upper level general education courses.

B. All 8 Distribution Areas have specific learning outcomes. Rubrics have been developed and revised over the years for each of these distribution areas. The rubrics are sent to faculty teaching one of the courses in a distribution area at the beginning of the semester. They are asked to complete the rubric using an assignment near the end of the course and return the results to the Office of Assessment and Undergraduate Studies. We currently do not have a good way to systematically use this information for continuous improvement of the courses.

A pilot project was initiated two years ago to try and use faculty committees to evaluate the learning in general education courses. The first pilot collected random samples of student work in the College Level Writing courses and the Baccalaureate Level Writing courses. The samples collected were given to a faculty committee of ten in a completely blind sampling. The faculty were then provided a rubric (variation of the AAC&U Writing Rubric) and asked to assess the student artifacts. A rubric calibration session was held before the faculty were given the

samples for assessment. This pilot project was extended last year to include Distribution Areas II and VIII.

C. The Faculty Senate at WMU is currently in the process of revising our general education program. Last April, the full senate passed a framework for the new program. This framework was largely developed from the AAC&U LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. A model was proposed at the January Faculty Senate meeting for feedback. It is hoped that a model will be accepted by the faculty at the April meeting. This is the only activity currently on our campus that is specifically related to the AAC&U LEAP Initiative.