

SUMMARY OF PROGRAM REVIEW

*Western Nevada College
General Education*

I. Description of Program Reviewed

The mission of General Education at WNC is to provide students who complete degrees and certificates of achievement with critical life skills that will benefit them in their personal and professional endeavors. Each degree- and certificate-granting program at WNC includes General Education requirements that can be fulfilled by selecting from lists of courses for each category. In addition, degree-seeking students are expected to demonstrate competence in the ten General Education student learning outcomes:

Students who complete a degree at WNC are expected to demonstrate they:

1. have college-level skills in reading, writing, and oral communication appropriate to their degree and/or emphasis.
2. can use appropriate college-level mathematical skills.
3. have problem solving, creative, and critical thinking skills.
4. have effective and efficient learning skills, including the location and evaluation of information.
5. have appropriate technological skills, including computer skills.
6. know the basic principles and processes of government at the local, state, national and international levels.
7. understand the methods of science and the role of science and technology in the modern world.
8. understand and apply social science principles, including an appreciation of participation in civic affairs.
9. have an understanding of fine arts or performing arts.
10. understand the importance of cultural traditions, diversity, and ethics in the modern world.

Students completing a certificate of achievement at WNC are expected to demonstrate they have the appropriate communication, computational and human relations skills.

II. Review Process and Criteria

The General Education Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee spent two years conducting or reviewing five assessment projects to determine how well WNC was accomplishing its General Education mission. Those projects were: 1) course- and program-level mapping of General Education student learning outcomes for the AA, AS, and AAS degrees; 2) an analysis of General Education course scheduling history; 3) an analysis of Community College Survey of Student Engagement results pertaining to General Education; 4) a survey of WNC employees' perceptions of the General Education Subcommittee in terms of its purposes and service; and 5) analysis of Graduate Survey results pertaining to General Education student learning outcomes. The Office of Institutional Research provided data used in the review process.

Dr. Paul Neill, director of the Core Curriculum at UNR, served as external reviewer, and Paul Eastwood, WNC Professor of Machine Tool Technology, was the internal reviewer. Both reviewers participated in a site visit and exit interview that included members of the program review team, members of the Program Assessment and Review Committee, Division Chairs, the Dean of

Instruction, the Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, and the President. The internal and external reviewers also met with a focus group of nine students representing the three main campuses who had applied for spring 2009 graduation.

III. Major Findings and Conclusions of the Program Review

The following are major strengths of the program that were identified during the review process:

- General Education course scheduling allows students to complete all General Education requirements within two years with one exception: the 12-credit, two-subject science requirement for the AS Mathematics degree, which cannot be completed exclusively through Web classes or at the rural centers.
- The survey of 2007-2008 graduates demonstrated that graduates had positive perceptions of their skills and knowledge acquisition in terms of General Education outcomes.
- Students who complete an AA or AS degree from WNC receive automatic fulfillment of lower-division General Education requirements at NSHE universities, state college, and community colleges that offer baccalaureate degrees.

The following are challenges identified during the review process along with corresponding recommendations (in italics) from the Program Review Team [P], internal reviewer [I], external reviewer [E], and administration [A]:

- Many of the General Education student learning outcomes have multiple foci, making them difficult to assess.
- Facilitate discussions involving all academic faculty to review and possibly revise the outcomes. [P]
- Depending on the courses students choose to fulfill their General Education requirements, programs cannot ensure that all students will take courses that address student learning outcomes 5, 6, 7, and 8. And the current process for conducting an academic program review does not require an examination of the extent to which programs allow students to meet the General Education student learning outcomes.
- Distill the ten student learning outcomes into fewer outcomes, make them overarching General Education objectives, and align each General Education requirement (category) with a few of the overarching objectives, thus ensuring that students will be exposed to all General Education student learning outcomes (or overarching objectives) through any combination of General Education courses. [E]
- Review all U.S. and Nevada Constitution courses to ensure that all offerings address outcomes 6 and 8; ensure that all General Education science courses address outcome 7; and identify courses within all requirements that address outcome 5. [P]
- The academic program review process should require mapping of program-specific and General Education courses to General Education student learning outcomes to ensure that students are exposed to all ten outcomes. [P]
- No AAS program except nursing requires a course that addresses the fine arts outcome.
- Evaluate the need for all other AAS programs to add a fine arts General Education requirement. [P]
- Consider allowing fine arts credit for completion of a fine arts-related co-curricular activity. [A]
- The 2008 CCSSE revealed that WNC students complete fewer writing assignments than students at similar colleges.
- Support faculty efforts to increase writing activities across the curriculum. [P]

- Prerequisites for writing-intensive General Education courses, such as the Composition II (ENG 102) prerequisite for core humanities courses (CH 201, 202 and 203), are not enforced, so some students lack the writing skills necessary to succeed in these courses. There is a lack of agreement among faculty about whether these prerequisites should be enforced.
 - *Encourage discussions among all faculty about the advantages and disadvantages of enforcing published prerequisites for General Education courses and remove prerequisites that are not enforced.* [P]
- Both CCSSE and a survey of recent graduates revealed that WNC students have limited conversations with people of different racial and ethnic backgrounds.
 - *Encourage faculty to initiate discussions, activities, and assignments that deal with diversity.* [P]
- Less than half of the teaching faculty who responded to a survey of all WNC employees indicated that they knew about the website that provided policies and procedures, forms, and contact information for the General Education Subcommittee. Similarly, students participating in the program review focus group indicated that they were exposed to very limited information about the General Education student learning outcomes and the rationale behind the General Education program.
 - *Further develop the Intranet pages to increase awareness among faculty regarding General Education requirements and student learning outcomes.* [P]
 - *Use the website to highlight faculty teaching General Education courses and their philosophies on General Education.* [E]
 - *Encourage faculty to address big questions in their curriculum to help students understand how the different components of the curriculum fit together and to deepen their learning.* [E]
- Although several faculty members are assessing General Education student learning outcomes, there is no college-wide, systematic approach to assessing those outcomes in General Education courses.
 - *Develop a framework and methods for assessing the General Education student learning outcomes in General Education courses.* [P, E]
- Focus group students indicated that collaborative advisement between Counseling Services advisors and academic faculty would be helpful.
 - *Pass this information on to Counseling Services and academic faculty.* [A]
- The focus group of students indicated that during new-student orientations, there is no discussion of the structure of the degrees or of General Education.
 - *Take advantage of this opportunity to explain to students how the General Education component fits together with program core courses.* [E]

IV. Descriptive Statistics

A. Number of students with declared major in the program area:

2008-09 N/A

B. Number of graduates from the program for the following years:

2006-07 N/A

2007-08 N/A

2008-09 N/A

C. Headcount of students enrolled in any course related to the program (duplicated):

Fall 2008 N/A