

**ACADEMIC AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

**AGENDA ITEM: 5.E**

**DATE: June 19, 2013**

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**SUBJECT: System Conference on Academic Quality – Next Steps**

Last month a System Conference on Academic Quality was held May 8-9 on the campus of SDSU. Over 90 people were in attendance, most of which were faculty. The main goal of the conference was to engage attendees in a series of presentations, panel discussions, and conversations devoted to understanding—and to improving—teaching and learning on our campuses. At the close of the conference it was agreed that a working group would be established to consider adopting the Degree Qualification Profile (DQP) as a framework for the system. Embedded within this is the expectation that this would include revisions to the system’s general education requirements.

The attached white paper has been drafted to frame this action. Members of the Council should review this and be prepared to offer edits. In addition, if the Council agrees that a working group will be established to consider implementation of the DQP, members should be prepared to discuss composition and membership.

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Discussion.

### **South Dakota's Academic Quality Initiative -- Preparing Students to be Successful**

The Regental System in South Dakota is committed to providing a quality education for students who attend our universities. To this end, there is a commitment to understanding and to improving all aspects of the teaching and learning processes. In fact, the system recently supported a conference that explored a range of topics around academic quality. Several questions were explored during the conference including:

- What do we want our students to know and be able to do?
- How can we assure that skills we want our students to learn/master are actually being taught in our institutions?
- How can student achievement be measured?

At the end of this conference Dr. Warner encouraged those attending to consider a review of the system's general education requirements and related assessment strategies.

It was recognized that in addition to mastery of content in a major field of study, our students need to develop other skill sets to be successful in today's work environment. While we commonly recognize that content in general education & field-related courses is critical to student success, employers are also expecting graduates to possess a set of "soft skills" such as:

- Inquiry, interpretation, and critical thinking;
- Literacy and communication (especially written communication);
- Collaborative problem solving and decision-making;
- Understanding of social, organizational, and technological systems;
- Individual and social responsibility, self-management, integrity, teamwork, creativity, enthusiasm, initiative, leadership, global awareness, appreciation of diversity;
- Understanding of ethics, values and how society, government and business works;
- How to cope with change and how to lead change;
- How to be assertive enough to get your concerns addressed;
- How to integrate knowledge from many sources.

During the conference, Dr. Peter Ewell discussed the Degree Qualification Profile (DQP), a framework that illustrates what students should know and be able to do once they earn their degree. In addition, the DQP specifies learning outcomes for associates, bachelors, and master's degrees. Further, it provides reference points for accountability that go beyond what is taught and focus on what is learned. Related assessment strategies suggest student learning should be demonstrated through tasks designed and administered by faculty, commonly within assessment activities already included in the classroom. As a result, campuses will be better able to provide evidence that graduates truly have the knowledge and skills needed to be successful.

The DQP framework includes the following five areas of learning:

- Specialized Knowledge: Mastery of strategically chosen subject areas.

- Broad/Integrative Knowledge: Supports inquiry into the relationships among subject areas and the integration of related realms of knowledge.
- Intellectual Skills: Manifestations of well-defined cognitive capacities and operations.
- Applied Learning: What students can *do* with what they know is the ultimate benchmark of learning. Commitment to analytic inquiry, active learning, real-world problem solving, and innovation is emphasized.
- Civic Learning: Preparing students for responsible citizenship. Requires the integration of knowledge and skills acquired, as well as engagement.

The complete description of the DQP provides a detailed rubric describing the levels of learning that should be achieved at each degree level. More information on the DQP can be found at the following link:

[http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The\\_Degree\\_Qualifications\\_Profile.pdf](http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/The_Degree_Qualifications_Profile.pdf)

At the close of the conference, it was agreed that a working group should be established to formulate a recommendation about the adoption of the Degree Qualification Profile and, if that is recommended, to develop a plan to implement the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) as a basis for general education and assessment within the BOR System.