

**SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS
PLANNING SESSION
AUGUST 11-12, 2015**

SUBJECT: General Education Review – Action Items

During the [August 2014 Planning Session](#), the Board of Regents discussed a number of factors that are currently impacting System General Education Requirements (SGR), Institutional Graduation Requirements (IGR), and system assessment strategies that rely upon the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP). The item prepared in advance of the BOR discussion provided background on the system’s involvement with a common general education strategy dating to 1985, and the most recent major revision in 1999 which reflects the current slate of SGR and IGR goals employed across institutions. In particular, four issues that had emerged as challenges within the Regental system over the past three to five years were presented along with a brief perspective on national initiatives underway to facilitate greater alignment across institutions/states. Following the discussion, BOR members supported the action items outlined at the end of the report calling for the following:

1. A review of the student learning outcomes that result in unique Institutional Graduation Requirements;
2. The continued value of the CAAP examination for assessing system General Education and establishing student academic proficiency;
3. Alignment of system General Education policy with national efforts to establish a coordinated foundation for Liberal Arts Education.

During the [September 2014 meeting](#), AAC agreed that the most effective approach for addressing these action items would be to establish a steering committee representing faculty and campus leadership. This steering committee would then be charged with evaluating the landscape of current national initiatives and identify one that could serve to provide a viable roadmap for facilitating significant change for the system’s approach to general education. Specifically, the BOR retreat item provided brief background on five national initiatives that may provide a useful framework for guiding faculty work in this area. To provide an opportunity for faculty to serve as the primary drivers for this agenda, a two-phase approach was recommended. Phase One included a comprehensive review by the steering committee of the national and regional level projects currently underway that could serve as a framework for redesigning the systems approach to general education.¹ The steering committee was assigned four specific

¹ To assist in this review, The Education Advisory Board was asked to provide technical assistance to the committee and provide research support as they work to narrow the scope of available options. A comprehensive research project on system general education approaches around the country was completed and the report was used to help shape steering committee recommendations. A copy of the report can be found at:
https://www.sdbor.edu/services/academics/documents/SystemWide_General_Education_Requirements.pdf

tasks to facilitate their work during phase one of the review including: 1) Identify common institutional and system level issues within existing general education structure; 2) Identify and evaluate national level initiatives that may serve as a useful framework for modifying existing approach to general education; 3) From this pool, identify one strategy that would serve as a useful roadmap for making systemic change to Regental system General Education policy; and 4) Develop action items for discipline level working groups for Board consideration with an intent to address a significant number of the issues/concerns identified by the steering committee. The following steering committee was developed with AAC feedback to ensure adequate coverage of the major discipline areas constituting much of the system general education structure, along with a mixture of faculty, administrators, and Board of Regents staff.

Table 1
System General Education Review Steering Committee

| Representation | Representative | Discipline/Area | Position |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| <i>BHSU</i> | David Wolff | History | Dean – Liberal Arts |
| <i>BHSU</i> | Amy Fuqua | English | Head – Arts & Humanities |
| <i>DSU</i> | Viki Johnson | Sociology | Faculty |
| <i>DSU</i> | Dale Droge | Biology | Faculty |
| <i>NSU</i> | Erin Fouberg | Geography/Honors College | Faculty |
| <i>NSU</i> | David Grettler | History | Faculty |
| <i>SDSM&T</i> | Linda DeVeaux | Biology | Faculty |
| <i>SDSM&T</i> | James Feiszli | Music | Faculty |
| <i>SDSU</i> | Kurt Cogswell | Mathematics | Head – Mathematics |
| <i>SDSU</i> | Josh Westwick | Communication | Faculty |
| <i>USD</i> | Chuck Lubbers | Journalism | Chair – C&I Committee |
| <i>USD</i> | Kurt Hackemer | History | Head - History |
| <i>EUC</i> | Lindsey Hamlin | Continuing & Distance Ed. | Director |
| <i>USD</i> | Dale Pietzrak | Education | Director - Assessment |
| <i>BOR</i> | Paul Turman | Academic Affairs | VP – Academic Affairs |
| <i>BOR</i> | Jay Perry | Academic Affairs | Director – Academic Programs |

The steering committee held an initial conference call on October 30, and Dr. Turman coordinated campus presentations and listening sessions at each of the Regental institutions to update faculty and administrators on the status and proposed outcomes for the work. An initial face-to-face meeting was scheduled on December 10, 2014, and the steering committee discussed desired outcomes of the general education review, how to articulate the value of general education to faculty and students, the importance of academic assessment and general education, and the challenges and opportunities posed by online general education courses provided within and external to the Regental system. Committee members also discussed the challenges to general education in South Dakota and identified four top priorities to address including: 1) Transfer/swirling students; 2) Assessment (including the CAAP exam); 3) Growth of distance education; and 4) Spatial placement of general education courses. Following this meeting a series of learning sessions were scheduled in January/February/March 2015 to evaluate and discuss five national initiatives. Following each discussion, steering committee representatives were asked to provide feedback and then overall ratings of the five initiatives prior to a face-to-face meeting in Pierre on April 8. At the conclusion of this meeting, the committee formulated a series of action items for consideration by the Board of Regents, which committee members were asked to vet broadly on their campus. These recommendations cover six broad areas and eleven proposed action items which are presented below.

- *Action Item 1: Restructure the current System General Education curriculum to align with the skills and content knowledge areas proposed through the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes.*
- *Action Item 2: Assign faculty groups to evaluate the application of LEAP Quantitative Literacy, Written Communication, and Oral Communication foundational skills to designated courses in these three subject areas and develop student learning outcomes and competencies that can be assessed using approved VALUE rubrics.*
- *Action Item 3: Evaluate institutional courses to meet the learning outcomes developed for Quantitative Literacy, Written Communication, and Oral Communication with the understanding that they will be assessed annually using the approved VALUE rubrics.*
- *Action Item 4: Assign faculty groups to develop student learning outcomes and competencies for coursework in the areas of Science, Social Sciences, Humanities, Histories, Languages, and the Arts.*
- *Action Item 5: Align the LEAP “Intellectual and Practical” and “Personal and Social Responsibility” skills in all core content knowledge areas.*
- *Action Item 6: Eliminate Institutional Graduation Requirements in the Regental system, and designate that existing requirements that meet program level requirements be retained at the college/department level. Those that do not serve program goals would be eliminated.*
- *Action Item 7: Organize the System Graduation Requirements using a two tiered structure that allows for the appropriate progression through a set of “Foundational” and “Investigative” experiences that reflect General Education content areas.*
- *Action Item 8: Provide for a distinction between students earning an associate’s (24 credit hours) and bachelor’s (30 credit hours) degree in both the “Foundational” and “Investigative” tiered structure.*
- *Action Item 9: Replace the CAAP examination with an objective assessment structure that relies upon approved student learning outcomes and competencies for Oral Communication, Written Communication, and Quantitative Literacy beginning with the 2016-17 academic year.*
- *Action Item 10: Establish a system assessment policy that requires the submission of student work in designated General Education Courses using a mechanism recommended by the System Assessment Committee.*
- *Action Item 11: Establish a General Education Council in Board Policy that allows for campus representation from each institution and ex officio members needed for expertise on particular issues. Membership would include faculty appointed by institutional leadership and a designated revolving chair to provide recommendations to the Academic Affairs Council.*

If the Board of Regents are supportive of the proposed recommendations from the steering committee, Phase Two would represent the creation of working groups designed around specific goals or learning objectives. Their work would occur between September and December of 2015 with a proposed set of recommendations for the changes to existing learning outcomes coming forward to the Board in April 2016 for implementation into existing Board Policies 2:7 and 2:26. Institutional and system curriculum processes would then occur at each institution for implementation for the Fall 2017 catalogs.

System General Education Overview

For the past two decades, general education in the Regental system has been guided by Board of Regents [Policy 2:7 – Baccalaureate General Education Requirements](#) and [Policy 2:26 – Associate Degree General Education](#) which establish the framework for system and institutional graduation requirements. Historically, the structure for these two sets of requirements has been embedded in policy from the point that General Education was first addressed by the Board. In January of 1985, the Board first approved a set of general education core requirements that delineated between a “Primary” core that were to be common across all six institutions, and a “Secondary” that were established to reflect the unique missions/majors for each institution.²

The General Education curriculum was again addressed by the Board following concerns raised during the 1992 Legislative session regarding student transfer of credit within the Regental system. Specifically, Legislators expressed concerns about the difficulty students were having when attempting to transfer introductory 100 and 200 level courses. To address this issue, BOR Policy 2:5 Transfer of Credit was modified during the April meeting to provide that “General education requirements in the primary core successfully completed at the sending Regental institution within the South Dakota higher education system will be accepted towards meeting these requirements at the accepting Regental institution within the state.” In June of 1992, the Board then took further action by formalizing Board policy 2:7³ which converted Board action into the policy framework that exists today.

Another rather detailed set of changes were approved in August of 1999 following a comprehensive System General Education review which included representatives from throughout the system. The efforts of the review committee resulted in removing the generic primary core areas and established goal statements and specific learning outcomes. For instance, the requirement that each student complete coursework in “Composition, 6 credit hours” was replaced with “Goal #1: Students will write effectively and responsibly and understand and interpret the written expression of others.”⁴ These changes further increased the core to 30

² Quoting from the minutes of the Committee on Academic and Student Affairs: “... the Committee approved the recommendation of the Academic Advisory Council of 27 hours (6 in composition, 3 in college algebra, 6 in natural sciences, 6 in social sciences, and 6 (in) the humanities and fine arts). She (Regent Tapken) said a secondary core, designed by each institution, will have a minimum of 15 credits.” Later in the minutes a rationale was provided: “In response to a question from Regent Owens as to why a primary and secondary core is being proposed, Regent McFarland said there was a need because of the diversity of majors. He explained that the primary core will not vary from institution to institution, however, the secondary core could vary.”

³ At the time, BOR Policy 2:7 lacked the subsequent detail that is in current policy. It included a brief description of the Primary and Secondary core, the core areas for each, and applicable courses that could be used to meet the established requirements (i.e., to meet the National Science core students could complete courses chosen from “Biology, Chemistry, Physics, or Earth Science”).

⁴ This goal statement was followed by 8 learning outcomes specifically stating that “Courses meeting this goal will collectively require students to: 1) Write logically and persuasively; 2) Use a variety of rhetorical strategies (e.g., expository, argumentative, descriptive); 3) Read critically the writing of others; 4) View writing as a process requiring planning, drafting, and revising; 5) Write for a variety of audiences, including academic audiences; 6) Incorporate formal research and documentation into their writing; 7) Use standard English; and 8) Use computer technology for basic communication-related tasks such as word processing and research.” Following these learning outcomes, a set of approved SGR courses for the system were listed.

required credits (from the original 27), which are to be completed within the first 64 hours of a student’s coursework.⁵ A series of other significant changes were also made including the language change to replace Primary Core with System General Education Requirements (SGR’s), and Institutional Graduation Requirements (IGR’s) replacing Secondary Core were made. Additionally, as specific lists of courses were incorporated into policy, the options were reduced from 500 to approximately 150 with all courses needing to be at the 100/200 level to receive BOR approval. This standard for maintaining a rather limited set of approved courses has been a central tenant managed by the Board since the current course list was approved. Despite routine course modification requests approved at each Board meeting, modifications to the SGR’s and IGR’s have been restricted to only the December BOR meeting each year.

In replacing the Secondary Core with Institution Graduation Requirements, the mandatory 15 credit hour threshold was also removed. In its place, separate goals (including learning outcomes and course lists) were established for each institution and were intended to align closely with the unique mission statement for each campus, as well as institutional goals. The IGR framework was further refined in 2004 when the Board directed that the general education requirements could not exceed 43 credit hours (30 for the SGR and 13 for the IGR), and asked that globalization/global issue and writing intensive requirements were to be included in the IGR or integrated into the majors. Table 1 below provides a reflection of the current General Education Requirements.

Table 1
System General Education and Institutional Graduation Credit Requirements

| <i>Institution</i> | <i>SGR</i> | <i>IGR</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>BHSU</i> | 30 | 11 | 41 |
| <i>DSU</i> | 30 | 11 | 41 |
| <i>NSU</i> | 30 | 11 | 41 |
| <i>SDSM&T</i> | 30 | 0 | 30 |
| <i>SDSU</i> | 30 | 5 | 35 |
| <i>USD</i> | 30 | 6 | 36 |

⁵ This modification better aligned with institutional accreditation requirements. The Higher Learning Commission has established a set of expectations relative to Programs, Courses and Credits for accredited institutions. Specifically, section B.1.h speaks directly to the requirements for general education noting that: “The institution maintains a minimum requirement for general education for all of its undergraduate programs whether through a traditional practice of distributed curricula (15 semester credits for AAS degrees, 24 for AS or AA degrees, and 30 for bachelor’s degrees) or through integrated, embedded, interdisciplinary, or other accepted models that demonstrate a minimum requirement equivalent to the distributed model. Any variation is explained and justified.” For additional information see: <http://policy.ncahlc.org/Policies/assumed-practices.html>

Initiative Review & Selection

During the December 2014 Steering Committee meeting, campus representatives identified a set of four barriers/challenges that should be addressed following a revision to the existing general education framework. With these challenges as background, the committee took part in a series of listening sessions, scheduled throughout January/February/March, focused on providing the representatives with information on the five most prominent national initiatives with alignment to general education at institutions around the country. For each of these discussions, leaders in each of the five identified projects were asked to join the committee for a two hour session designed to provide a more detailed overview of the scope and outcomes for each initiative, and provide opportunities for members to inquire about specific features that enhance program success. Following each discussion, committee members were presented with an opportunity to provide feedback by responding to a series of open-ended questions.

1. *Based on the conference call and background material on the project, could the structure for this initiative serve as a framework to help the system address challenges that exist in these three priority areas?*
2. *What barriers or challenges exist for how the project fits with our current general education structure, and/or the processes and procedures we have in place for managing general education?*
3. *What additional issues/questions still exist for you as a committee member regarding the way the Passport project is structured that we should seek to uncover?*

A brief overview for each of the initiatives can be found below including links to more elaborate explanations. Additionally, the feedback obtained from Steering Committee members following each of these sessions can be found in the footnotes referenced to each of the dates the listening sessions were conducted.

*Interstate Passport Initiative ([Passport](#)) – January 28, 2015*⁶

Launched in early 2014 by the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE), participating institutions mutually agree upon learning outcomes and required proficiency criteria in lower division and general education courses allowing for easier transfer between schools in different states. Phase one of the project involved sixteen public institutions in four Western states (including North Dakota) using competencies in oral/written communication and quantitative literacy that translate into course equivalencies in mathematics, English, writing, and communications.⁷ Phase II of the project, funded by the Lumina and Gates Foundations, seeks to identify similar Learning Outcomes with the six remaining areas associated with LEAP.

⁶ Steering Committee feedback following the review of the Interstate Passport listening session can be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/services/academics/documents/GenEd_Feedback_WICHEPassport.pdf

⁷ For more information on the Interstate Passport, see Paul Fain, “New Approach to Transfer,” *Inside Higher Education*, 9 January 2014, accessed 30 June 2014, <http://www.wiche.edu/info/passport/newApproachToTransfer.pdf>; “The Interstate Passport: A New Framework for Transfer,” WICHE, accessed 30 June 2014, <http://www.wiche.edu/passport/about/overview>.

*Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) – February 11, 2015*⁸

Guided by the Association of American Colleges & Universities, LEAP's goal is to produce college graduates with practical skills by emphasizing "liberal education," defined as learning involving broad knowledge of the wider world that goes beyond an undergraduate major. LEAP outlines a set of Essential Learning Outcomes required for all students regardless of major, including knowledge of human cultures and the natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning. Launched in 2005, LEAP has over 1,300 participating institutions. Nine states (including North Dakota) are currently participating in the [LEAP States Initiative](#) emphasizing general education renewal and transfer policies.⁹

*Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcome Assessment (MSC) – February 25, 2015*¹⁰

The MSC is an outgrowth of the AAC&U's [LEAP](#) and the Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education ([VALUES](#)) project. Facilitated through the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO), the pilot program documents student achievement through analysis of students' projects, papers, and research using cross-discipline assessment rubrics as opposed to standardized tests. Faculty and institutions can use the data for assessing and improving student learning outcomes and creating benchmarks to compare against other institutions. Sixty-eight schools in nine states are participating in the MCS pilot program.¹¹

*Competency Based Education (CBE) - March 8, 2015*¹²

A growing number of institutions and systems have begun working to aggressively pursue competency based courses and programs that are designed to allow students to progress at their own pace by mastering measured "competencies" as opposed to a fixed course structure based on seat time. Competency-based education (CBE) is a trend in higher education that promises to shorten the time needed to complete degrees. The CBE model allows students to apply learning or skill mastery occurring prior to enrollment to their degree program. In addition, ambitious students can rapidly progress through a CBE program because it does not rely on the calendar requirements of traditional college credit courses. CBE programs appeal to many adult learners, especially those with college credits but lacking a degree. Accreditation and financial aid obstacles previously hindered the growth of CBE programs, but no more; the Department of Education clarified financial aid rules for CBE programs last year and accrediting bodies like the Higher Learning Commission are now publishing [CBE guidelines and best practices](#).¹³

⁸ Steering Committee feedback following the review of the Liberal Education & America's Promise listening session can be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/services/academics/documents/GenEd_Feedback_LEAP.pdf

⁹ For more information on LEAP, see "An Introduction to LEAP," AAC&U, accessed 30 June 2014, http://www.aacu.org/leap/documents/Introduction_to_LEAP.pdf; "Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP)," AAC&U, accessed 30 June 2014, <http://www.aacu.org/leap/index.cfm>.

¹⁰ Steering Committee feedback following the review of the Multi-State Collaborative listening session can be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/services/academics/documents/GenEd_Feedback_MultiStateCollaborative.pdf

¹¹ For more information on MSC, see "68 Institutions in Nine States to Pilot New Approach to Learning Outcomes Assessment," AAC&U Press Room, 23 June 2014, accessed 30 June 2014, http://www.aacu.org/press_room/press_releases/2014/mcscschools.cfm.

¹² Steering Committee feedback following the review of the GPS listening session can be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/services/academics/documents/GenEd_Feedback_CompetencyBasedEducation.pdf

¹³ The success of on-line CBE specialists [Western Governors University](#) (WGU) has also aided in mainstreaming CBE. The National Council on Teacher Quality recently [ranked WGU's](#) secondary teacher education programs as the best in the country. In 2011, Indiana partnered with WGU to create a new state public university, [WGU Indiana](#). The Gates Foundation has joined a [partnership](#) studying CBE efforts at eight schools while the Lumina Foundation

*The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) – March 25, 2015*¹⁴

The DQP is an effort supported through the Lumina Foundation at establishing the meaning of a college degree (as opposed to the value of a specific major or program) by establishing reference points for associate, baccalaureate, and master’s degrees describing what students should know and be able to do with each subsequent level. The premise behind the DQP is that some desired learning outcomes span academic disciplines, thus the degree becomes more important than the specific knowledge content acquired because of the continual evolution of workplace demands, changing nature of individual jobs, new technologies, and growing civic challenges. Over 400 institutions are currently working with Lumina on the DQP project.¹⁵

Committee Selection & Recommendations

Following the review of the five national initiatives, committee members were asked to rank each of the projects, and the overall consensus was that the Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative was the ideal initiative. Ninety-one percent of the committee members ranked this as either their first or second option, followed by DQP (2.09 average ranking), Passport (3.54), MSC (3.72), and CBE (4.27). Additionally, when asked to rate each of the initiatives according to the level of agreement that they could serve as a useful framework for the Regental systems general education requirements, members affirmed the overall rankings noting that LEAP and the DQP have the strongest potential alignment.

Following discussion of committee quantitative and qualitative feedback during the April 8 meeting, the consensus among the steering committee was to draw upon the Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative developed by institutions affiliated with the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U). Educators designed LEAP as a response to modern demands for highly educated workers capable of performing in the modern workforce and as engaged and informed citizens. Within this framework, a set of guiding principles and benchmarks for liberal education¹⁶ in the 21st century are presented. These “*Essential Learning Outcomes*”¹⁷ are divided into four primary areas, including “Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World,” through exposure to a range of disciplines beyond the students

has funded eighteen universities and two higher education systems to form the [Competency-Based Education Network](#). Schools like [Southern New Hampshire University](#) advertise programs without credit hours while the University of Wisconsin System has launched the CBE-related [Flexible Option](#) program for IT and health care workers.

¹⁴ Steering Committee feedback following the review of the DQP listening session can be found at: https://www.sdbor.edu/services/academics/documents/GenEd_Feedback_DegreeQualificationsProfile.pdf

¹⁵ For more information on DQP, see “The Degree Qualifications Profile 2.0: Defining U.S. Degrees Through Demonstration and Documentation of College Learning [Draft],” Lumina Foundation, January 2014, accessed 30 June 2014, <http://www.luminafoundation.org/publications/DQP/DQP2.0-draft.pdf>.

¹⁶ LEAP defines *liberal education* as “An approach to college learning that empowers individuals and prepares them to deal with complexity, diversity, and change. This approach emphasizes broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth achievement in a specific field of interest. It helps students develop a sense of social responsibility; strong intellectual and practical skills that span all major fields of study, such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills; and the demonstrated ability to apply knowledge and skills in real-world settings.” The definition evolved through a study commissioned by the AAC&U that found 74 percent of employers agree with this educational approach. More information on the report and definition of liberal education can be found at <https://www.aacu.org/leap/what-is-a-liberal-education#survey>.

¹⁷ The framework for the Essential Learning Outcomes is presented in the AAC&U report entitled “College Learning for the New Global Century” which was published in 2008. A copy can be acquired from: <http://secure.aacu.org/store/detail.aspx?id=LEAPRPT>

program of study; this is traditionally conceived as the basic general education curriculum at most institutions.

Secondly, essential skills emerge through the general education and degree program curriculum that foster “Intellectual and Practical Skills” as well as “Personal and Social Responsibility” (see Table 2 for a complete list of the content knowledge and skills). Finally, “Integrative and Applied Learning” emerges as students are required to synthesize material within general education coursework, but more specifically within the coursework required to meet degree requirements within the major itself. While a definitive set of system general education requirements would not be specified for coursework that would fall within this fourth area, the proposed framework is designed to signify to students that integrative and applied learning is expected to occur at the program level in the respective majors/minors they intend to pursue. Institutions that have adopted LEAP seek to align general education and program requirements in such a way as to ensure that both content knowledge and essential skills are fostered across the curriculum even when a standard set of learning outcomes may not be possible across disciplines or colleges.

Table 2
Essential Learning Outcomes Developed through the Liberal Education & America’s Promise Initiative
Outlining Both Content Knowledge and Skills Intended to Provide a Well-Rounded Liberal Arts Education

| <i>Content Knowledge</i> | <i>Cross Cutting Skills</i> |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sciences • Mathematics • Social Sciences • Humanities • Histories • Language • Arts | <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Intellectual and Practical Skills</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry and analysis • Critical and creative thinking • Written and oral communication • Quantitative literacy • Information literacy • Teamwork and problem solving <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Personal and Social Responsibility</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global • Intercultural knowledge and competence • Ethical reasoning and action • Foundations and skills for lifelong learning • Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies |

Action Item 1: Restructure the current System General Education curriculum to align with the skills and content knowledge areas proposed through the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes.

Align LEAP Essential Outcomes/Rubrics with Foundation & Investigation Courses

Within the “Intellectual and Practical Skills” area of the Essential Learning Outcomes, LEAP has identified “Written and Oral Communication” and “Quantitative Literacy” as foundational skills needed for all liberal arts graduates. The Steering Committee supported these skills as necessary for a student to establish proficiency early in their academic career to ensure success in corresponding coursework. Students should be encouraged to complete coursework in these areas upon their entry into any Regental system, or demonstrate competencies upon

transfer. While the current SGR structure includes goals that speak to these content areas, additional work is necessary to better align the current learning outcomes and competencies with how LEAP institutions operationalize these essential requirements. As a point of emphasis, despite the inclusion of Mathematics in the “Content Knowledge” section, the committee supported the revision of learning outcomes for this particular area (facilitating the inclusion as a Foundational course), and further development of learning outcomes/competencies that could be aligned with the current assessment rubrics developed through LEAP. To address this issue, the steering committee advances the following two action items:

Action Item 2: Assign faculty groups to evaluate the application of LEAP Quantitative Literacy, Written Communication, and Oral Communication foundational skills to designated courses in these three subject areas and develop student learning outcomes and competencies that can be assessed using approved VALUE rubrics.¹⁸

Action Item 3: Evaluate institutional courses to meet the learning outcomes developed for Quantitative Literacy, Written Communication, and Oral Communication with the understanding that they will be assessed annually using the approved VALUE rubrics.

In addition to acquiring content knowledge through the study of Mathematics, the LEAP initiative identifies the need for students to acquire content knowledge in the areas of Science, Social Sciences, Humanities, Histories, Languages, and Arts. Content knowledge in each of these areas should be assessed and further aligned the current SGR goals and learning outcomes that were first developed more than a decade ago. When this occurred, the additional detail needed to align these learning outcomes with a clear set of competencies for the various content areas were never established. As a result, the ability for faculty/institutions to effectively evaluate course placement with a given goal has been a difficult process. Once new/refined learning outcomes and competencies have been developed, faculty in these content areas would also be tasked with determining the set of courses that can be used at the various Regental institutions for meeting content knowledge requirements. When possible, discipline council representatives would be ideally tasked with assisting with this process for their respective content knowledge areas (i.e., English, Fine Arts, Math, Humanities, etc.).

There is an additional need to evaluate how “Intellectual and Practical Skills” and “Personal and Social Responsibility” skills outlined in the Essential Learning Outcomes serve as crosscutting skills across each of these content areas. This will require separate alignment of these eight LEAP skills against core content knowledge or the “Integrative and Applied Learning” content that is required for students in their areas of specialization for degree completion. For example, learning outcomes to ensure a student has achieved “Intercultural Knowledge and Competence” will not be tied to a specific course required for all students. This skill is likely to emerge through the completion of an SGR and the major (i.e., Psychology, Nursing, Engineering, etc.). Work will be necessary to evaluate the core content and program

¹⁸ Developed over time by faculty and educational professionals, the VALUE Rubric Development Project has been designed to provide institutions with useful tools for assessing student learning through authentic measures. Currently, Rubrics exist for 16 Essential Learning Outcomes and can be used or modified by faculty to meet the unique needs for their institutions degree requirements. Additional information on the VALUE Rubrics can be found at: <http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics>

requirements to demonstrate that students graduate having acquired this important skill. To address these issues, two action items are recommended:

*Action Item 4: Assign faculty groups to develop student learning outcomes and competencies for coursework in the areas of Science, Social Sciences, Humanities, Histories, Languages, and the Art.*¹⁹

*Action Item 5: Align the LEAP “Intellectual and Practical” and “Personal and Social Responsibility” skills in all core content knowledge areas.*²⁰

¹⁹ This process aligns well with the Higher Learning Commission when providing best practice guidance for General Education programs. Specifically, Section 3.B 1-5 of the Criteria for Accreditation specifies: “The institution demonstrates that the exercise of intellectual inquiry and the acquisition, application, and integration of broad learning and skills are integral to its educational programs. 1) The general education program is appropriate to the mission, educational offerings, and degree levels of the institution; 2) The institution articulates the purposes, content, and intended learning outcomes of its undergraduate general education requirements. The program of general education is grounded in a philosophy or framework developed by the institution or adopted from an established framework. It imparts broad knowledge and intellectual concepts to students and develops skills and attitudes that the institution believes every college-educated person should possess; 3) Every degree program offered by the institution engages students in collecting, analyzing, and communicating information; in mastering modes of inquiry or creative work; and in developing skills adaptable to changing environments; 4) The education offered by the institution recognizes the human and cultural diversity of the world in which students live and work; and 5) The faculty and students contribute to scholarship, creative work, and the discovery of knowledge to the extent appropriate to their programs and the institution’s mission.

²⁰ LEAP skills to include: Inquiry and Analysis, Critical and Creative Thinking, Information Literacy, and Teamwork and Problem Solving, Civic Knowledge and Engagement, Intercultural Knowledge and Competence, Ethical Reasoning and Action, Foundations and Skills for Lifelong Learning

Institutional Graduation Requirements

In their early deliberations, the Steering Committee identified two significant challenges that are adversely impacted by the existence of Institutional Graduation Requirements in the Regental system (growth of transfer/swirling students and distance education). Traditional academic policies governing requirements for graduation arose when offerings were primarily face-to-face, either on campus or at some other designated delivery site. Students pursuing a degree were required to attend a campus, so limits on credit hour requirements implicitly tied enrollment in course offerings on campus by faculty of the institution to this degree.²¹ However, as the system sought a number of efficiencies and alignment to allow transferability for students, policies were developed to establish the system's academic offerings around a common catalog of courses. This structure helped support those students enrolled in courses offered at one of the system's Centers; while also allowing the system to appear as a single university to all students (i.e., controlling for separate enrollments, financial aid, progression and ultimately graduation). With the growth in online offerings, the broad impacts of this are now clear. The system has created an environment where the traditional distinctions between institutional courses and transferred courses have been effectively blurred.

One feature of the common catalog that was retained at the institutional level was the evaluation of course equivalencies which has traditionally been done by faculty in designated disciplines. Despite an institutional review process which is guided by BOR Policy 2:5 Transfer of Credit, once an institution determines an appropriate course equivalences, that course has system level implications especially for coursework that has been approved to meet General Education requirements. This course-by-course equivalency process has had an impact on the system's ability to recruit the growing number of transfer students within the state and from the region in recent years. Table 3 below provides a perspective into the gradual decline that the system has experienced over the past five years in transfer student recruitment across all sectors.²² Within system transfers have declined the least with a modest 5.8% decrease over the past five years. However, students transferring in from other postsecondary institutions in the state has declined by more than 37% during this same time period, along with a 29% decrease in the number of technical institute students transferring in as degree seeking students. "Other Institutions" reflect those transfer students who are recruited from institutions outside South Dakota, including South Dakota residents who have begun their postsecondary careers outside the state prior to returning. Since Fall 2010, the system has seen a 11% decline in students from this subset of postsecondary institutions.

²¹ For the Regental institutions, these are captured in [Board Policy 2:29, Definition of Credits and Related Institutional Requirements](#) which focuses on the specific limits that a student needs to be awarded a degree or to have completion of a major transcribed. For example, section 1.C of this policy notes a student must complete a minimum of 30 hours from a campus to be awarded a degree and must complete at least 50 percent of the requirements for a major from the institution offering the program.

²² Each year these enrollments are depicted in the Fact Book in the table depicting "Transfer Enrollments: All Undergraduate Transfer – Fall Census Date Extract." Transfer students are those who enroll at a given institution in an undergraduate degree program in the fall term, regardless of the number of hours they are enrolled. Previous transfer, continuing, high school, and special students are excluded.

Table 3

Five Year Transfer Patterns for the Regental System Based on Institutional Type – Fall 2010-14

| Institution Type | Fall 2010 | Fall 2011 | Fall 2012 | Fall 2013 | Fall 2014 | % Change |
|-----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <i>Regental System</i> | 606 | 601 | 559 | 688 | 571 | -5.8% |
| <i>South Dakota</i> | 224 | 212 | 195 | 187 | 140 | -37.5% |
| <i>Technical Institutes</i> | 272 | 266 | 260 | 210 | 193 | -29.0% |
| <i>Other Institutions</i> | 1,333 | 1,290 | 1,276 | 1,212 | 1,181 | -11.4% |
| Total New Transfers | 2,461 | 2,372 | 2,302 | 2,301 | 2,087 | -15.2% |

When these data are evaluated from a different perspective, it is evident that the decline in transfer students resides at different institutions within the Regental system. When comparing Fall 2010 against Fall 2014 enrollment numbers, DSU and SDSM&T were the only two institutions that experienced overall increases in transfer students, while each of the other four institutions experienced drops of at least 17% or more.

Table 4

Five Year Transfer Patterns for the Regental System By Institution – Fall 2010-14

| Institution | Fall 2010 | Fall 2011 | Fall 2012 | Fall 2013 | Fall 2014 | % Change |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| <i>BHSU</i> | 404 | 370 | 355 | 432 | 308 | -23.8% |
| <i>DSU</i> | 198 | 226 | 275 | 259 | 258 | 30.3% |
| <i>NSU</i> | 167 | 166 | 126 | 141 | 119 | -28.7% |
| <i>SDSM&T</i> | 93 | 73 | 88 | 129 | 119 | 28.0% |
| <i>SDSU</i> | 828 | 717 | 743 | 705 | 687 | -17.0% |
| <i>USD</i> | 771 | 820 | 715 | 635 | 596 | -22.7% |

Not only have policies and practices within the system allowed for ease of transferability among Regental students, but the approach for the delivery of online courses and programs has also altered the landscape for how students made decisions related to majors, minors, and certificate programs that are available at non-home institutions. Many students routinely enroll in online courses offered by one of the other universities. The most recent analysis on this swirling activity in the Regental system indicated that fewer than 25% of graduates each year have coursework that is exclusive to their home institution that is granting the degree. The fact that this multi-institution enrollment is transparent to the student is a benefit truly unique to South Dakota. Our common catalog and course registration system allows students to enroll/complete courses from any institution and have it immediately transcribed with the assurance that it meets a requirement. The flexibility allowable under this framework is evident in the Regental system, as depicted in the annual Distance Education Report. Table 5 on the following page points to the enormous growth in the number of students being served through Regental distance delivery offerings. Overall, distance headcount grew 2.6% from FY2013 to FY2014, which is slightly less than last year's growth rate of 8.5%. The 2.6% annual growth rate recorded for FY2014 amounts to a numeric increase of $n=570$ students. That more than 22,000 unique students enrolled in at least one distance course in FY2014 is perhaps the most notable observation from this table.

Table 5
Annual Unduplicated Headcount for Distance Education Courses

| <i>Fiscal Year</i> | <i>Undergraduate</i> | <i>Graduate</i> | <i>All</i> |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------|------------|
| <i>FY2010</i> | 12,333 | 3,632 | 15,973 |
| <i>FY2011</i> | 13,839 | 4,069 | 17,916 |
| <i>FY2012</i> | 15,579 | 4,649 | 20,245 |
| <i>FY2013</i> | 16,585 | 5,373 | 21,963 |
| <i>FY2014</i> | 17,436 | 5,187 | 22,533 |
| <i>% Δ (1-yr)</i> | 5.1% | -3.5% | 2.6% |
| <i>% Δ (5-yr)</i> | 41.4% | 42.8% | 41.1% |

Furthermore, Section 1.C.5 of BOR Policy 2:29 permits students completing programmatic requirements at any institution to complete the requirements for any minor offered by any of the universities and to have this transcribed. However, this does not extend to majors and, in fact, as noted above the Board does retain the right to approve new program (majors) offerings by any given institution. This policy direction has created an incredibly effective foundation as the system promotes efficient support for student progression. Following common academic traditions, in the Regental System students are awarded a degree upon the completion of a program which includes a proscribed set of degree, major and outside/elective/total credits. To be awarded a degree in a specific major, a student must meet these requirements at the degree granting institution. The system's campuses have established a small set of dual degree agreements under which students can be awarded a degree by both partner institutions. In these arrangements, students complete all of the requirements for a program (degree, major and total credits) at each institution. While these arrangements are common, they often times require six or more years of study. With Board approval, the campuses have also contracted for programs, allowing campuses to transcript degrees even though few if any of the courses required in the major are taught by the institution.

Recently, SDSU and NSU entered into a cooperative agreement to explore unique strategies to allow students enrolled at either institution to complete a major in a related field offered by the other. The Board was made aware of this during the December 2013 meeting. While these were originally envisioned as dual degree agreements, as discussions evolved, staff at the institutions agreed that students would be best served if they were permitted to complete the programmatic (degree plus major) requirements at one of the partner institutions and solely the requirements for a major at the other institution. Doing so would have resulted in a student being able to successfully complete the dual degree program while only meeting the IGR's at the home institution. Currently a student can complete both programs, yet would have to take between 5-to-11 additional credits unless the new approach were adopted by the Board.²³ Under

²³ *NSU Accounting Student seeking to also complete an Agricultural Business program at SDSU* – Students would need to take the courses required in the Agricultural Business (29 credits) and 5 additional credit hours of IGR's specific to SDSU.

- First Year Seminar IGR – 2 Credits
- Cultural Awareness IGR – 3 Credits

SDSU Agricultural Business student seeking to also complete an Accounting program at NSU – Student would need to take the courses required in Accounting (39 credits) and 11 additional credit hours of IGR's specific to NSU.

- Personal Wellness – 3 Credits

the current model, the credit totals depend on which institution a student call home when participating in the Dual Degree Program.

The proposal advanced to the Board would have waived these additional IGR requirements (5 to 11 credits), and students after completing the IGR's at their home institution would have only needed to complete the additional major requirements for what would essentially become the double major offered by the other institution. Committee A raised concerns about the implications that could result from moving forward with the proposed model and asked that additional information be brought back for further discussion. Both institutions subsequently agreed to withdraw the proposal and move forward with the approach currently allowed through Board policy.

As the first five action items outlined in the previous section affirm, the Steering Committee support that the LEAP Content Knowledge areas provide an opportunity for alignment with the current Regental System General Education requirements. During discussion of potential modifications to the system IGR structure, the committee evaluated the potential for including first year seminar and capstone requirements for students that would be common across each Regental institution. However, it was determined that the ability to structure these courses in such a way to allow for students to use them interchangeably among institutions and programs would be difficult under the current structure for many first-year seminar and capstone courses.²⁴ The Steering Committee discussed these challenges while also considering challenges associated with expanding distance program/course delivery, a desire to grow transfer student populations, and allow for greater sharing of degree programs across the system. As a result, the majority of the General Education Steering Committee view the Institutional Graduation Requirements, Globalization, and Writing Intensive requirements outlined in current Board policy as having evolved into requirements that: 1) are better positioned within the approved degree programs; 2) duplicate existing content knowledge areas; and/or 3) extend beyond the general LEAP framework. With this in mind, the following action item is advanced for Board consideration:

Action Item 6: Eliminate Institutional Graduation Requirements in the Regental system, and designate that existing requirements that meet program level requirements be retained at the college/department level. Those that do not serve program goals would be eliminated.

-
- Social Science – 3 Credits
 - Humanities – 6 Credits

²⁴ For instance, students currently double majoring in Chemical and Environmental Engineering are required to take Capstone experience courses that are established unique to their specific degree programs. Students are expected to complete a Capstone experience that is unique to the discipline and prepares them for the career in that respective field. Establishing a Capstone course as a feature of the IGR structure in place within the Regental system would allow students to use a Capstone experience in one discipline interchangeably with that in another program. Steering Committee members agreed that if the Capstone was essential to the program, that it should be imbedded within the requirements of that degree program specifically.

Spatial Placement & Degree Level Distinctions

Current Board Policy 2:7 Baccalaureate General Education Curriculum establishes that incoming freshmen must complete 30 credit hours of System General Education within their first 64 credit hours. More specifically, the policy requires that the 18 credit hours outlined in Table 6 below must be completed within the first 48 hours. Additionally, transfer students with more than 18 credit hours entering from outside the Regental system must complete these credit hours of general education within the first 30 credit hours taken at a Regental institution. Students who fail to meet this requirement have pre-registration holds put in place until they are able to successfully complete the course requirements.

*Table 6
Course Requirements for the First 48 Credit Hours for Incoming Freshman*

| <i>Goal</i> | <i>Course Requirement</i> | <i>Credit Hours</i> |
|----------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Goal #1</i> | Written Communication | 3 |
| <i>Goal #2</i> | Oral Communication | 3 |
| <i>Goal #3</i> | Social Science | 3 |
| <i>Goal #4</i> | Humanities & Fine Arts | 3 |
| <i>Goal #5</i> | Mathematics | 3 |
| <i>Goal #6</i> | Natural Science | 3 |
| | Total | 18 |

The spatial placement of General Education coursework emerged as a priority issue for the Steering Committee by noting concerns that students would benefit from exposure to general education content at different points in their educational progression. While campus level advising has sought to ensure that students complete skill or foundational courses early in their academic program, the current framework does not provide this level of guidance for students. In practice this appears to function more specifically within the majority of Institutional Graduation requirements (i.e., writing intensive and globalization which were not required to be completed in the first 48 credit hours). To take this further, a number of the General Education courses are designed to provide students with career/workforce skills, as well as skills necessary for the completion of upper division or programmatic coursework. For instance, coursework designed to enhance Oral Communication, Written Communication, and Quantitative Literacy are treated as foundational courses at many institutions,²⁵ separated by Investigative and Capstone/Integration based coursework occurring within the major. The proposed framework would seek to more clearly distinguish the placement of essential skill development across all three areas with significant emphasis on the acquisition of skills embedded within specific program requirements. Based on this issue, the Steering Committee advances the following action item for consideration:

²⁵ California State University – Long Beach employs the framework of: 1) The Foundation; 2) Explorations; and 3) Capstone. The University of South Dakota has employed a similar structure in advising documents for students that relies upon: 1) Foundations; 2) Investigations; and 3) Expertise and Integrations. These structural frameworks are intended to provide students with a stronger conceptual understanding for how the General Education curriculum ties with the degree program requirements at the institutional level.

Action Item 7: Organize the System Graduation Requirements using a two tiered structure that allows for the appropriate progression through a set of “Foundational” and “Investigative” experiences that reflect General Education content areas.²⁶

Table 7 below reflects analysis conducted by the Education Advisory Board (EAB) on behalf of the Board of Regents to assess the General Education requirements in place at states around the country. As is evident in the table, system requirements vary considerably, and the Higher Learning Commission’s position on General Education requirements establishes: “The institution maintains a minimum requirement for general education for all of its undergraduate programs whether through a traditional practice of distributed curricula (15 semester credits for AAS degrees, 24 for AS or AA degrees, and 30 for bachelor’s degrees) or through integrated, embedded, interdisciplinary, or other accepted models that demonstrate a minimum requirement equivalent to the distributed model. Any variation is explained and justified.”

Table 7
Credit Hours Required for System General Education Requirements

| <i>Required Credit Hours</i> | <i>State</i> | <i>Institution(s)</i> |
|-------------------------------------|---|--|
| <i>27 Credits</i> | Idaho Utah | All Post-secondary Institutions All Institutions in System of Higher Ed. ²⁷ |
| <i>30 Credits</i> | California Indiana Kentucky New York | U. of California System All Public Institutions (2 and 4 year) All Public Institutions (2 and 4 year) SUNY and CUNY Systems |
| <i>34 Credits</i> | Massachusetts | All Public Institutions |
| <i>36 Credits</i> | Florida North Dakota | State University System, FL College System All University System Campuses |
| <i>35-37 Credits</i> | Arizona | State Universities & Public Community Colleges |
| <i>37-41 Credits</i> | Illinois | 100 Participating Colleges & Universities |
| <i>41-42 Credits</i> | Alabama Texas | All Public Institutions All Public Institutions (2 and 4 year) |

²⁶ For students earning a Bachelor’s degree the System Graduation Requirements would include:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundational Core (12) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Oral Communication (3) ○ Written Communication (6) ○ Quantitative Literacy (3) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigative Core (18) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sciences (6) ○ Social Sciences (3), ○ Humanities (3) ○ Histories (3) ○ Arts/Languages (3) |
|--|--|

²⁷ Institutions must require an additional 18 to 27 credit hours to fulfill the general education breadth requirements.

Additionally, the Regental system currently does not distinguish between General Education requirements for associate and bachelor degree seeking students. While IGR's were not included in the associate degree requirements for students, no level of distinction in terms of learning outcomes or content knowledge required in the core has been evaluated. Currently, South Dakota is just one of seven states that do not maintain a statewide policy for the transfer of credits obtained through the completion of an associate degree program to a four-year institution with the guarantee that the student will have met all lower-division requirements and attained junior status. Nine other states are considered to have partial guaranteed transfer between either certain associate degree transfers only to designated baccalaureate programs, or because associate degrees are only transferable to certain institutions or systems within the state rather than all public institutions. Associate degree programs for a number of community college systems²⁸ and four-year institutions²⁹ around the country have established 21-24 credit hour requirements for their associate degree programs that align with degree requirements at the baccalaureate level.

Expansion of online educational opportunities, increased transfer patterns, and the desire to further expand educational pathways for students at off-campus locations warrants development of unique but progressive requirements (i.e., stackable degree opportunities) for students who may seek to begin their educational experience at the associate degree level. To address this issue, the Steering Committee advances the following action item for consideration:

Action Item 8: Provide for a distinction between students earning an associate's (24 credit hours)³⁰ and bachelor's degree (30 credit hours) in both the "Foundational" and "Investigative" tiered structure.

²⁸ The California Communication Colleges requires that students complete a minimum of 24 credit hours in the areas of Natural Science (3), Social Sciences & Humanities (9), English (3), Math (3), Communication (3), and Societal Awareness (3).

²⁹ Penn State University requires that Associate Degree seeking students complete a minimum of 21 credit hours in the areas of Writing/Speaking (3), Quantification (3), Natural Science (3), Arts (3), Humanities (3), Social/Behavior Sciences (3), and Skill/Knowledge (3)

³⁰ For students earning an Associate's degree the System Graduation Requirements would include:

- Foundational Core (9)
 - Oral Communication (3)
 - Written Communication (3)
 - Quantitative Literacy (3)
- Investigative Core (15)
 - Sciences (3)
 - Social Sciences (3),
 - Humanities (3)
 - Histories (3)
 - Arts/Languages (3)

Objective vs. Standardized Assessment Model

In December 1995, the South Dakota Board of Regents adopted an initiative requiring sophomores to sit for and pass a proficiency examination effective the 1998 spring semester. This initiative was undertaken to address several accountability issues related to increase standards, necessary analysis of general education requirements, as well as an ability to compare South Dakota students' performance to national norms. Guided by [Policy 2:28 Proficiency Examination](#), the CAAP examination has served as a Rising Junior examination to measure student proficiency in the areas of Reading, Writing, Mathematics and Science.³¹ Students who fail to meet the established qualifying scores on their first attempt are provided an opportunity to retest two additional times within one academic year. Those failing on the third attempt are allowed to complete alternative certification options which must be approved by a campus committee and the System Vice President for Academic Affairs. Students failing to meet qualifying scores are denied subsequent registration at all Regental institutions. On a system basis, 11.3% of students in the 2013-14 cohort required remediation (i.e., failed to meet the qualifying score) on one or more CAAP subtests. Table 8 below shows that a similar distribution of remediation needs has occurred over the last five years.

Table 8
Percentage of Students Requiring CAAP Remediation: Five Year Trend

| | 2009- 2010 | 2010- 2011 | 2011- 2012 | 2012- 2013 | 2013- 2014 |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Writing | 6.6% | 7.3% | 8.4% | 7.7% | 8.5% |
| Mathematics | 1.2% | 1.9% | 1.7% | 1.8% | 1.5% |
| Reading | 3.8% | 4.4% | 4.1% | 4.9% | 4.4% |
| Science | 0.5% | 0.8% | 0.6% | 0.6% | 0.5% |
| System Remediation (Unduplicated) | 9.5% | 10.8% | 11.2% | 11.3% | 11.3% |

With the implementation of the CAAP in 1998, the system developed a framework that supports a culture of assessment. As this examination was institutionalized within the system, campuses began to utilize the results in their institutional assessment plans for meeting HLC Accreditation requirements. However, when initially implemented, faculty in the system respectfully disagreed with the usefulness of the CAAP to accurately assess system general education requirements, and when the new SGR and IGR framework was implemented in 1999, no alignment between CAAP measures and student learning outcomes were assessed. Board Policies 2.7 and 2:26 establish the broad set of common student learning outcomes that courses meeting the system's general education requirements must address. When evaluated in the

³¹ During the pilot period conducted in 1996 and 1997, a total of 2,141 students completed the CAAP exam with students scoring on average above the national norms. Taking these national norms into consideration, a confidence interval was constructed around the cut score to address the issue of test reliability. It was determined that South Dakota students scoring within and above the confidence interval pass the examination. Ultimately, qualifying scores were set at ½ standard deviation below the national user norms with a 95% confidence interval³¹ constructed around the cut score and projections at the time predicted that 12.5% of the total number of students who participated in the pilot would have failed on their initial attempt. Using this framework the current qualifying scores were established for Reading (56), Writing (59), Mathematics (52), and Science Reasoning (54) with a request that the Board revisit the proficiency examination every four years to ensure that existing policies are fulfilling accountability objectives.

context of the system's single catalog of courses, faculty worked to identify those courses with common student learning outcomes and these are recognized as common courses. In addition, the system's placement strategies are based on common standards as incoming students are held to common expectations in Math and English. Those failing to meet these standards are required to complete remedial/developmental courses, and many of the institutions have moved the delivery of at least the math curriculum toward a competency based approach. A thorough review of the usefulness of the Proficiency Examination policy was warranted, when combined with the outdated testing model employed by ACT for administering the CAAP.³²

A decade after implementation, a series of analyses have been performed to evaluate factors that impact student performance on the CAAP. One definite characteristic (academic preparation) stands out as a significant predictor for those students who are required to remediate following failure to meet qualifying scores. Students who met the ACT *College Readiness Benchmarks* (sub-scores at or higher than 18 for English, 21 for Reading, 22 for Math, and 24 for Science Reasoning) were 99.9% likely to meet all qualifying scores. In fact, of the 1,200 students who had met all four benchmarks in the most recent analysis, only one had failed to meet all four qualifying scores. The above data established the possibility of using ACT scores to draw statistical inferences about likely performance on related CAAP measures. Because students earning high scores on one exam are likely to earn high scores on the other, ACT scores may provide a valid basis for exempting students from the CAAP testing requirement, provided that specific and identifiable scoring thresholds on the ACT can be linked with (historically) satisfactory performance on the CAAP.

With this analysis in mind, revisions to Policy 2:28 were approved by the Board during their December 2014 meeting that allowed for waiving the CAAP examination for students who have: 1) met the ACT College Readiness Benchmarks; 2) obtains an ACT/SAT composite score of 24 or higher prior to their entry into the Regental system; and/or 3) earns an associate's/bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited institution in the United States. This policy change resulted in a modification to existing policy with the inclusion of a new section 4 to Policy 2:28 that identifies the four areas in which students may be waived from the proficiency requirement.

The VALUE rubric templates developed through LEAP provide an opportunity to engage in an objective assessment process using actual student work. Currently, Regental institutions have been relying on the CAAP examination to serve as the primary mechanism for assessing SGR student learning outcomes. For Institutional requirements, campus assessment personnel have developed internal measures that allow for the assessment of both globalization and writing intensive courses. Under new assessment guidelines from the Higher Learning Commission, institutions are required to better track student progression across the curriculum and provide either standardized or formative assessment data demonstrating student development. Through the creation of more definitive learning outcomes and competencies for the "Knowledge Content" area and continuous development of the cross cutting "Intellectual and Practical Skills and "Personal and Social Responsibility" institutions have increased capacity to: 1) align

³² The tests must be administered in a face-to-face proctored environment making it increasingly difficult for our growing distance student population and still resides in paper format resulting in scoring delays and timely reporting to students.

assessment practices with student learning outcomes and competencies; 2) measure academic quality in designated courses; and 3) use that data to make continuous improvements in both General Education and program level requirements.³³ Under this approach, the goal would be to develop a structure that would allow for random selection of courses, and student work within those courses to demonstrate student progression related to approved learning outcomes. Doing so would ensure a model that considers the potential impact on current faculty workload, while allowing for objective assessment at the course level. To accomplish this end, a new assessment structure must be designed to capture and evaluate newly defined learning outcomes. Two action items are advanced to respond to these issues:

Action Item 9: Replace the CAAP examination with an objective assessment structure that relies upon approved student learning outcome and competencies for Oral Communication, Written Communication, and Quantitative Literacy beginning with the 2016-17 academic year.

Action Item 10: Establish a system assessment policy that requires the submission of student work in designated General Education Courses using a mechanism recommended by the System Assessment Committee.³⁴

³³ This approach would also align with new requirements being implemented through the Higher Learning Commission which seeks that: “The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.”

³⁴ Only as an example of an option that may be explored, there are currently a number of institutions that rely upon the use of an E-Portfolio system to collect student work for designated courses. Faculty are asked to evaluate student work using the approved rubric by assessing against student learning outcomes. Currently, an E-Portfolio tool exists within Desire2Learn which serves as the Regental Learner Management System.

General Education Council

A number of states have established formal General Education Councils in policy to provide oversight and ensure continuous evaluation of state level general education requirements. Representatives primarily include faculty designated by campus leadership to not only oversee institutional general education practices, but also provide recommendations to the system on issues or challenges affecting general education policy and practice. Regional examples of states adopting this strategy include Utah and North Dakota.

In Utah, the Regents' General Education Task Force consists of one representative from each system campus as well as ex-officio members who provide expertise on specific issues. The Task Force establishes general education learning goals, proposes methods to assess learning outcomes, and makes reports to the system Chief Academic Officers. The Task Force also coordinates various general education workgroups in content areas such as fine arts, humanities, social and behavioral sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences, composition, and quantitative literacy/reasoning. Each year the Task Force also conducts an annual "What is an Educated Person? Conference" to review system general education competencies.³⁵ Similarly, North Dakota has established a General Education Council consisting of all public higher education institutions in addition to some private and tribal institutions. Two representatives from each participating university serve on the Council. The Council promotes inter-campus dialogue on general education, coordinates programming, and works collaboratively on the design, implementation, and evaluation of general education within the state.³⁶

South Dakota currently has a temporary System General Education Steering Committee including faculty, assessment staff, administrators, and continuing education representatives from multiple content areas/disciplines. The Steering Committee's charge includes formulating the recommendations in this item. However, a permanent council or committee structure providing system-level oversight and review as well as assisting with formal institutional general education review processes would benefit the Regental system. As higher education continues to evolve, the implementation of a formal council or committee charged with evaluating these issues and advancing recommendations as a subcommittee of the Academic Affairs Council would be a valuable resource for: 1) monitoring campus migration of existing general education policy; 2) on-going shaping of general education to fit the unique needs of public universities in South Dakota; 3) ensuring requirements and learning outcomes match South Dakota's philosophical approach to general education; and 4) ensuring timely modifications to the system's approach to general education. To provide for this capacity, the Steering Committee advances the following action item:

Action Item 11: Establish a General Education Council in Board Policy that allows for campus representation from each institution and ex officio members needed for expertise on particular issues. Membership would include faculty appointed by institutional leadership and a designated revolving chair to provide recommendations to the Academic Affairs Council.

³⁵ The Utah System Policy and further description of the Regents' General Education Task Force can be found at: http://higheredutah.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/R470-04_16.pdf.

³⁶ The Constitution of the North Dakota General Education Council can be found at: <http://www.ndus.edu/uploads/resources/2515/constitution-of-the-nd-general-education-council.pdf>.