

SOUTH DAKOTA BOARD OF REGENTS

Committee on Academic and Student Affairs

AGENDA ITEM: I – C

DATE: April 1-2, 2015

SUBJECT: General Education Steering Committee Update

Dr. Paul Turman presented an item to the Board titled “System and Institutional Graduation Requirements and Associated Assessments” at the August 2014 Board of Regents Retreat. That item explained the general education framework currently in use in the Regental system as established in Board Policy 2:7 Baccalaureate General Education Curriculum and Board Policy 2:26 Associate Degree General Education Requirements, including an explanation of System Graduation Requirements (SGRs) and Institutional Graduation Requirements (IGRs). The item explained the context of major general education revisions implemented in the Regental system over the past two decades and documented emerging challenges facing the system’s general education requirements. The Board of Regents approved a study of the system’s general education program in response to the item focusing on the following three action items:

1. A review of the student learning outcomes that result in unique Institutional Graduation Requirements;
2. A review of 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.

Following approval from the Board of Regents, Board staff and the Academic Affairs Committee (AAC) discussed the System Review of General Education at their October 2014 and September 2014 meetings. These discussions resulted in the establishment of a project timeline and the appointment of a General Education Steering Committee comprised of representatives from each campus.

A website detailing the work of the Committee is available at the following address:
<http://www.sdbor.edu/services/academics/GenEd.htm>

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RECOMMENDED ACTION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Information only.

General Education Steering Committee Representation

The General Education Steering Committee consists of two representatives from each university, a representative of the EUC, and an assessment representative. AAC participated in the selection of Committee members. Two members of the Board office staff are coordinating the work of the Committee. Committee members include:

BHSU	David Wolff	Professor of History, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts
BHSU	Amy Fuqua	Assoc. Professor of English, Chair of Arts and Humanities
DSU	Viki Johnson	Assoc. Professor of Sociology
DSU	Dale Droge	Assoc. Professor of Biology
NSU	Erin Fouberg	Professor of Geography, Director of the Honors Program
NSU	David Grettler	Professor of History
SDSM&T	Linda DeVeaux	Assoc. Professor of Biology
SDSM&T	James Feiszli	Professor of Music
SDSU	Kurt Cogswell	Professor of Mathematics, Dept. Chair Mathematics
SDSU	Josh Westwick	Assistant Professor of Communication
USD	Chuck Lubbers	Professor of Journalism, Chair C&I Committee
USD	Kurt Hackemer	Professor of History, Dept. Chair History
EUC	Lindsey Hamlin	Director Continuing & Distance Education (SDSU)
ASSESS.	Dale Pietzrak	Professor of Education, Dir. of Assessment (USD)
BOR	Paul Turman	System VP for Academic Affairs
BOR	Jay Perry	Director of Academic Programs

Project Timeline

The Regental System General Education Review project timeline spans from October of 2014 to April of 2016. The timeline includes preparing an interim report for the Board of Regents at the June 2015 meeting and seeking Board approval on Committee recommendations at the December 2015 meeting. Implementation of approved modifications would take effect for the Fall 2016 term. A copy of the timeline is included with this item as ATTACHMENT I.

The work of the Committee is occurring in two phases. In *Phase I*, the Committee will:

- Identify and evaluate national and regional initiatives that may serve as a useful framework for modifying the existing approach to general education.
- Identify common institutional and system level issues within the existing general education structure.
- Develop action items for discipline level working groups for Board consideration with intent to address a significant number of the issues/concerns identified by the steering committee.

In *Phase II*, the Committee will establish work groups to review and recommend modifications to system learning objectives and goals for implementation into existing Board Policy 2:7 and 2:26. The Phase II work would occur April through September of 2015. Resulting

institutional and system curriculum processes would occur in time for the April 2016 Board meeting.

Summary of Committee Activities to Date

The Committee began work with an orientation meeting in October 2014. Members reviewed an overview of the committee's charge, discussed existing challenges of system graduation requirements (SGRs) and institutional graduation requirements (IGRs), the CAAP examination, credit transfer, "swirling" students (those who complete credits at multiple Regental institutions), and other issues. [Minutes of the meeting](#) are available on the [Regental System General Education Review](#) website.

The Committee's second meeting occurred in December of 2015. The 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:

1. Transfer/swirling students
2. Assessment (including the CAAP exam)
3. Growth of distance education
4. Spatial placement of general education courses

[Minutes of the meeting](#) are available on the Regental System General Education Review website.

Dr. Turman asked Committee members at the conclusion of the December 2015 meeting to respond by email to two questions:

1. What is the value of general education to the students at your institution?
2. Which major feature(s) should be retained as we undertake general education revisions for the system?

The responses will guide and inform future Committee discussions on the system's philosophical approach to general education. A broad summary of the responses is below:

What is the value of general education to the students at your institution?

*Six members noted general education contributes to citizenship skills, either directly mentioning "citizenship" or by referencing useful contributions to society beyond the workplace and chosen academic or professional field.

*Six members responded that general education provides the soft skills desired by employers, including but not limited to critical and creative thinking and oral and written communication.

*Five members stated general education provides basic academic skills needed for all disciplines, including providing a well-rounded, multi-disciplinary intellectual background.

*Four members stated that general education provides exposure to subjects and learning experiences students would otherwise miss with discipline-specific learning.

*Three members noted that broad general education training is among the distinctive features that separate a baccalaureate degree from technical or vocational degrees.

Which major feature(s) should be retained as we undertake general education revisions for the system?

*Five members stated the need to retain student access to broad, general knowledge courses.

*Three members stated need to retain campus distinctiveness in general education.

*Many members cited individual subjects or areas of education they want retained. Written and oral communication, diversity, and globalization were the most commonly mentioned.

Education Advisory Board

The Board office recently joined the Education Advisory Board's (EAB) University Systems Forum. EAB is one of the largest providers of research, technology, and consulting services to colleges and universities nationwide. As part of our membership, EAB consultants are providing technical assistance and research support to the Committee. Specifically, EAB is currently researching and preparing a report on system-wide general education requirements and issues in other states. The analysis will ensure that South Dakota's general education reforms match best practices occurring elsewhere.

Review of National and Regional Initiatives Affecting General Education

During Phase I of the project, the Committee is conducting a comprehensive review of national and regional projects that might serve as a framework for redesigning the system's approach to general education. These projects include, but are not limited to, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education's (WICHE) Interstate Passport Project, the Association of American Colleges & Universities' (AAC&U) Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative, the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association's (SHEEO) Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Learning Outcome Assessment (MSC), and the Lumina Foundation and National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment's (NILOA) Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP). The Committee is currently participating in learning sessions about these projects conducted by representatives of the respective organizations. The current schedule for the learning session is as follows:

January 28, 2014 WICHE Interstate Passport

The Interstate Passport is a learning outcomes-based framework for student transfer with the goal of improving graduation rates, shortening time to degree, and saving students' money. The project provides a framework for a lower-division general education core eligible for cross-border transfer of a general education block of credits. South Dakota is one of seven states currently participating in this project.

February 11, 2015 LEAP

LEAP emphasizes "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.

February 25, 2015 MSC

The MSC is a pilot program that 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.

General Education Review Timeline

