

General Education Task Force
29 August 2006

Summary of Departmental Statements

Last year, the General Education Task Force invited departments and programs to submit statements responding to a number of questions regarding general education. Statements were received from twenty-four departments or programs: Anthropology, Appalachian Studies, Art, Biology, Chemistry, Communication, Computer Science, English, Family & Consumer Sciences, Finance, Banking & Insurance, Foreign Languages & Literatures, Geography & Planning, Geology, History, Library, Interdisciplinary Studies, Marketing, Mathematics, Music, Philosophy, Political Science & Criminal Justice, Religious Studies, Technology, Theatre & Dance. These have been posted on our website: http://www1.appstate.edu/orgs/gen_ed/. The Task Force welcomes submission of statements by other departments and programs this fall.

The following is a compilation of quotations (phrases, statements) excerpted from the departmental statements. We believe that the quotations are a representative sampling of departments "in their own words." The quotations are categorized according to the four major goals outlined by the Task Force in April 2006. As you look through these excerpted statements, you will note that departments in apparently widely divergent disciplines use very similar language to express their own goals with respect to general education. Thus, there is perhaps more consonance and agreement than we generally acknowledge from the perspective of individual programs or disciplines.

There is general agreement across departments and programs regarding the four goals. Effective communication, for instance, is viewed as a central practice in all of the departments reviewed. It is generally agreed that communication at different levels and in different styles involves various literacies (e.g. visual, scientific) and utilizes a variety of media to develop a broad range of skills in reading, writing, listening, and interpreting. Interdisciplinarity is integral to the way that departments tend to understand critical and creative thinking. Each area expresses a desire to encourage students to integrate their knowledge across academic disciplines. There is a common vision that as students discover concepts and employ problem solving skills, they will develop critical perspectives that will enable them to manage a complex and changing future.

Furthermore, a majority of the departments encourage the development of local and global connections. The specific connections may vary; however, the disciplines generally desire not only to foster an appreciation of diversity (biological, chemical, natural physical, artistic, historical, political, economic, cultural) but also to encourage creative and active engagement with diverse forms and concepts as students interact with communities locally and globally. Finally, the departments and programs emphasize the need to challenge students by encouraging them to put the knowledge they gain into thoughtful and reflective practice. The disciplines suggest a variety of ways for students to engage in such practice involving, for example, service learning, community engagement, responsible decision-making, and continuing education.

Outcomes Selected from Departmental Statements (excerpts “in their own words”):**I. Communicating effectively**

- Writing is not only a practice, but a central issue in anthropology (Anthropology)
- Pride in regional heritage (Appalachian Studies; Art)
- In addition to learning the laboratory and field methods of their discipline our majors have curricular “designators” to increase skills in critical reading, writing, and public speaking. We should expand our efforts to develop these “tools” and, more importantly, to teach our students to apply them broadly. (Biology)
- Information literacy (skills and knowledge): effective and efficient information retrieval, utilization of basic software (Chemistry)
- As a discipline, communication has always argued that effective oral communication goes beyond being able to stand up and give a presentation. (Communication)
- Understanding concepts of computers, project-oriented course work, coping with change (Computer Science)
- Development of written communication skills (English)
- Students become active and reflective readers (English)
- Effective (oral) communication and written communication (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Good writing skills, a firm foundation in (Finance, Banking & Insurance)
- The analytical and problem-solving skills that one develops while improving language proficiency help students become...better readers/writers in English, and more aware of nuances of meaning in their own language (Foreign Languages & Literatures)
- Communicative skills (Geography & Planning)
- Communication of ideas (Geology)
- Express themselves clearly in writing Do basic calculations as a method of reaching conclusions (Geology)
- Communication Skills: writing reports, essays, and correspondence in plain language; speaking effectively to groups and to individuals, listening carefully and empathetically; portraying ideas clearly and imaginatively in a variety of formats tailored to particular audiences, such as visual media. (History)
- Investigative Skills: identifying and locating people who have information relevant to a task or problem. Identifying source materials necessary to the solution of a problem. (History)
- The critical reflection on the nature of information itself, its technical infrastructure and its social, cultural and even philosophical context and impact (Library)
- Students need to navigate an increasingly information-rich world that moves at a rapidly accelerating pace. (Interdisciplinary Studies)
- Practical skills involved in effective use of information technology and information resources, either print or electronic. (Library)
- Skills in oral and written communication and in college level mathematics (Marketing)
- General education should provide essential skills in communication and reasoning. (Math)

- Graduates should be able to think clearly and critically about questions that utilize quantitative and spatial concepts and should be able to understand a variety of ways that problems from real-world contexts are solved. (Math)
- Skills of reasoning, analytical writing, critical reading, and effective communication (Philosophy)
- Demonstrate effective communication, effectively analyze information, have analytical skills (Technology)
- Recognize the dynamics of working with people and be able to work effectively with diverse opinions, cultures and attitudes (Technology)
- Metaphorical communication--express and explore metaphor through visual, vocal, musical, kinesthetic and textual modes (Theatre & Dance)
- Develop "other ways of knowing" and give students the opportunity to make intellectual and physical connections, self-confidence that comes from body awareness, and techniques for maintaining fitness (Theatre & Dance)

II. Thinking critically and creatively

- Opportunity for cultural critique, critical thinking, and a way of thinking that embraces both science and humanism (Anthropology)
- Cuts across traditional boundaries (Appalachian Studies)
- Visual arts as a vital and integral part of human experience. (Art)
- Cultivate an appreciation of aesthetic experience as a vital dimension of the human condition. (Art)
- Students acquire the skills to critically analyze the ever growing and increasingly complex matrix of visual images that mediate our understanding of the world. (Art)
- The search for knowledge and understanding, critical and logical examination of the world (Biology)
- In addition to learning the laboratory and field methods of their discipline our majors have curricular "designators" to increase skills in critical reading, writing, and public speaking. We should expand our efforts to develop these "tools" and, more importantly, to teach our students to apply them broadly. (Biology)
- Scientific literacy (knowledge): healthy skepticism of media "science", ability to make informed decisions as a voter and consumer, basic knowledge of current topics in science (global warming, energy concerns, evolution, stem cell research, etc.) (Chemistry)
- Computer science helps students engage in sustained reasoning, to manage complexity, test solutions, prepare for the unexpected (Computer Science)
- Development of interpretive competence (English)
- Meta-level reflection on the nature, history, function....of different modes of interpretation (English)
- Critical thinking is required to make appropriate choices (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Synthesis (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Decisions....are viewed within historic, current, and future trends perspectives (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Possess critical thinking and problem-solving skills (and) adapt these skills to new settings (Foreign Languages & Literatures)

- The analytical and problem-solving skills that one develops while improving language proficiency help students become better overall learners. (Foreign Languages & Literatures)
- Reasoning, creative problem-solving, critical geographic thinking, spatial reasoning (Geography & Planning)
- (Knowledge of) the scientific method, a sense of the process of scientific discovery (Geology)
- investigative, analytical and communication skills essential for success in all walks of life (History)
- Asking useful questions and then finding out where and how to find the answers (History, Philosophy and Religion)
- Problem-Solving: defining a problem clearly; critically evaluating alternative courses of action; creating divergent solutions to a problem when more than one answer is possible. (History)
- Interpretive Skills: ability to sense the worth of an idea, to determine how to capitalize on it, and to sell the idea to the right people. Ability to assess an area of work in terms of its effect on an entire organization. (History)
- The skills required for them to become active learners who take ownership of their own education. (Interdisciplinary Studies)
- Moves away from the pattern of the “Introduction to . . .” course and seeks topics that enable students to develop integrative habits of mind while studying material that crosses a number of disciplinary boundaries. (Interdisciplinary Studies)
- During their senior year, many Appalachian students are expected to complete a capstone project and/or to develop and complete a research project within their major discipline. (Library)
- See the educated, well-rounded person of the twenty-first century as a critical thinker, an effective communicator and problem-solver (quantitatively and qualitatively), who has the ability to take the “general knowledge” of his/her formal education and apply it to new situations, new cultures, and to the various publics that they will typically confront in their professional environment. (Marketing)
- Becoming an educated individual involves learning to transform a volume of information into knowledge and then to transform knowledge into wisdom. (Math)
- A proper general education should prepare our graduates to be compelled by learning, excited by the connections and insights that can be gained from applying various perspectives, and delighted by the prospect of serious contemplation. (Math)
- To foster the development of particular habits of mind (reasoning, generalizing, analyzing, representing, extrapolating, inferring, and conducting thought experiments). (Math)
- The arts enrich learning methodologies through their standards of observation, discernment and interpretation; through the uses of movement, sound and images; through their particular histories and their demonstrations of social and cultural development, and through their explorations of ideas. (Music)
- Sound reasoning and the identification and possible resolution of complex problems (Philosophy Area, Philosophy & Religion)

- Identify, construct, and defend sound arguments (Philosophy Area, Philosophy & Religion)
- Break down complex problems into more easily handled parts (Philosophy Area, Philosophy & Religion)
- Engage in conceptual analysis (Philosophy Area, Philosophy & Religion)
- Expose explicit and implicit assumptions (Philosophy Area, Philosophy & Religion)
- Foster critical thinking skill and the ability to engage in intelligent discourse on a broad range of contemporary issues? (Political Science & Criminal Justice)
- Aesthetic discernment and interpretation, experiential learning (Theatre & Dance)

III. Making local to global connections

- Appreciation for contemporary human diversity and unity as well as an understanding of mechanisms driving disunity and conflict (Anthropology)
- Critical understanding of the global processes that structure much of the human condition in the contemporary world as well as in the past. (Anthropology)
- Pride in regional heritage, focus on Appalachian regional culture and protection of the natural environment (Appalachian Studies)
- Service to the community and the region (Appalachian Studies)
- Global identity with links to other cultures throughout the world (Appalachian Studies)
- Visual arts as a vital and integral part of human experience, attain global cultural literacy (Art)
- Understanding the meaning and significance of the visual arts requires an awareness of how social, historical, political, scientific and technological developments shape the artist's experience and the works they produce. (Art)
- Put knowledge in cross-disciplinary context, in societal context (Biology)
- Scientifically literate graduates must be able to compete in a global economy. (Chemistry)
- Preparation for life in the modern world requires communication with a cross section of diverse people who often have conflicting needs and interests. Perhaps more than ever, educated persons need to communication with sensitivity and skill with those of widely different backgrounds, cultural experiences, and values. (Communication)
- Values, cultural background, and global perspective all play a role in (our) decisions (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Develop practices for understanding societies different from our own (Foreign Languages & Literatures)
- As we raise international and intercultural awareness through language and culture, students become more tolerant of racial and ethnic diversities they will face at home (Foreign Languages & Literatures)
- The study of foreign language is essential to the understanding of (and effective communication with) other peoples and cultures (Foreign Languages & Literatures)
- Emphasize social processes and patterns that are culturally complex (Geography & Planning)
- Connect the diversity of human communities (and) actions, and environmental characteristics in different places to show that events in one place have impacts in other places (Geography & Planning)

- The chance to understand the complex origins of their multicultural, international society (History)
- The content matter that we develop in our courses combines material from contemporary reality with historical materials, resulting in interdisciplinary discussions of a wide range of topics. (History)
- Model and solve problems from within human cultures and the natural world. (Math)
- Through the arts, learners develop understandings of their own societies and of other societies. (Music)
- Awareness of the world's diversity (Religion Area, Philosophy & Religion)
- Engage in an empathetic dialogue with peoples of other traditions (Religion Area, Philosophy & Religion)
- Appreciate diversity (Technology)
- Empathize with peoples from different cultures, backgrounds, and eras (Theatre & Dance)

IV. Understanding responsibilities of community membership

- A consciousness of global social problems and anthropology's role in promoting social justice (Anthropology)
- Service to the community and the region (Appalachian Studies)
- Community, responsibility, interdisciplinarity (Appalachian Studies)
- Visual arts as a vital and integral part of human experience. (Art)
- Science vs. magic: how to be informed about pseudo-science (like Creation Science, Intelligent Design, herbal remedies) (Biology)
- Put knowledge in cross-disciplinary context, in societal context (Biology)
- Science touches the life of every citizen every day (Biology)
- Scientifically literate graduates must be able to compete in a global economy. They must be able to collaborate not only with other scientists, but also with industry management. Our business and science graduates should be familiar with the basic tenets employed by US industry in conducting effective Quality programs. (Chemistry)
- In addition, [students] should understand the factors that influence their decision-making, and the factors that affect the potential success or failure of their communication efforts. (Communication)
- Ethical standards in the workplace (Computer Science)
- Computer Science also addresses social and ethical implications of technology and limitations on what such technologies can do. (Computer Science)
- Understanding and respect for the opinions and ideas of others (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Taking responsibility early in life for our own health and well-being (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Ethical issues and ethical behavior (Family & Consumer Sciences)
- Meta-level reflection on.....social/ethical consequences of different modes of interpretation (Foreign Languages & Literatures)
- Anticipation of societal and environmental problems and benefits that result from private property development...(involving) social, political, economic, legal, and administrative perspectives (Geography & Planning)

- Collaborate effectively in solving local, regional, and global problems (Geography & Planning)
- Human Relations: interacting cooperatively with others; communicating orders, instructions and feelings with openness and empathy; delegating tasks in ways that show respect for others and receptivity to new ideas; acquiring information from people who may be hard to reach or reluctant to divulge such information. (History)
- (Re)discover the complex roots of and rationales for their modern world's many problems as well as their role as citizens to face these problems in a rational way. (History)
- The inclusion of a service-learning component (Interdisciplinary Studies)
- Information literacy addresses information ethics and plagiarism, and enables learning to continue beyond the university. (Library)
- General education should provide all students with the foundation skills for informed citizenship and lifelong learning. It should cultivate the skills, knowledge, values, and habits that will allow graduates to lead personally enriching and socially responsible lives. (Math)
- Identify stakes in complex and contested issues (Philosophy Area, Philosophy & Religion)
- Reason in a sound manner about complex moral, social, and political problems (Philosophy Area, Philosophy & Religion)
- Knowledge and skills for developing intelligent, responsible citizenship (Political Science & /Criminal Justice)
- Function intelligently and effectively in an increasingly interdependent world replete with issues of democracy, justice and human rights (Political Science & /Criminal Justice)
- Apply critical thinking skills to real world situations (Political Science & /Criminal Justice)
- Be technologically literate--equipped with the skills and abilities to weigh technological and scientific data against moral and social outcomes to make informed decisions in a technological society (Technology)
- Recognize the interdependence of the global world and the ecological, environmental, economic, and social impacts of decisions (Technology)
- Engage in collective questioning of the values and ideas (Theatre & Dance)