

Interim Report of the University General Education Committee
November 2007



Georgia Baptist College of Nursing



Interim Report of the University General Education Committee

*Executive Summary

The University General Education Committee proposes to the Provost the following conceptual framework for General Education at Mercer University:

Mercer University's founding vision, articulated by Jesse Mercer in the 1830s, dedicates us to promote free inquiry, religious liberty, and inclusiveness-values consonant with Baptist heritage. University President William D. Underwood underscored that vision in 2006, noting that "...the extent to which a university transforms the lives of individual students, who in turn transform their communities, represents the ultimate measure of a university's greatness." To put this transformative vision into practice within the communities we serve, a Mercer University education emphasizes experiences that infuse intellectual growth, cultural understanding, civic responsibility, and moral discernment with practical competencies.

The distinctiveness of their programs and traditions notwithstanding, Mercer University's undergraduate colleges and schools share learning outcomes that reflect Mercer's mission to educate the whole person., These undergird the General Education Curricula, which provide the necessary foundation for disciplined study and lifelong learning.

General Education is designed to help students cultivate and refine habits of mind that prepare them to contribute constructively and meaningfully to society. To realize this goal, General Education strives to instill in persons broader perspectives while empowering them to find fuller and richer citizenship in a world in which different cultures, social institutions, and technologies intersect in multiple and diverse ways.

The University General Education Committee proposes to the Provost the following outcomes and operational definitions of General Education at Mercer University:

Four Outcomes of General Education

A Mercer education emphasizes experiences that foster *intellectual growth, cultural understanding, civic responsibility, and moral discernment*. These four interrelated capacities inform the intended outcomes for general education.

Intellectual Growth

Cultural Awareness

Civic Responsibility

Moral Discernment

Intellectual growth may be interpreted to include complexity of thought, integrative and synthesizing ability, quantitative analysis, critical inquiry, critical reflection, creative expression, integration of life and learning experiences, self understanding and knowledge, and capacity for continued learning and intellectual growth.

Cultural awareness may be interpreted to include global perspective, intercultural perspective, empathy, perspective taking, engaging the other, cultural appreciation.

Civic responsibility may be interpreted to include active responsible citizenship, the ability to engage with problems and issues, civility and respect, collaboration and working in teams, and caring.

Moral discernment may be interpreted to include judgment in ambiguous situations, academic integrity, ethical reasoning, ethical behavior, and the ability to act upon reflectively-held convictions.

These broad learning outcomes are achieved, not in the abstract, but in and through the exercise and development of certain specific practical competencies that are infused in these four outcomes of general education.

Communicating effectively in writing in a variety of modes and settings

Communicating effectively orally in a variety of modes and settings

Reasoning quantitatively

Integrating coherently diverse perspectives with knowledge

Acting perceptively and responsibly in light of the education one has received

As required by the University's accrediting body, general education programs at Mercer will constitute a minimum of 30 semester hours to include credit hours in humanities/ fine arts, social/ behavioral science, and science/mathematics.

Revision of general education goals and outcomes

The committee distinguished between a focus on developing capacities necessary to negotiate and contribute to a rapidly changing world (a process approach to general education) and a focus on learning content and examining eternal truths (related to a content or knowledge based approach to general education). Committee members agreed that it is important that the revised outcomes reflect the University's Quality Enhancement Plan. Committee members agreed with the statements in the current *Mercer University Catalog* that suggest that the general education outcomes should reflect the distinctiveness of the undergraduate schools and colleges and represent "a summary of the central, intersecting objectives and outcomes common to all of Mercer's programs."

Following discussion in the schools and colleges, committee members generated a list of purposes of general education that reflects both capacities or habits of mind that are to be developed as well as knowledge to be obtained. The list follows:

- To help students promote social integration and prevent social disintegration
- To help students make connections (as in an integrative experience)
- To challenge mainstream culture
- To cultivate respect for others
- To understand tradition as innovation and to understand the importance of keeping roots in tradition
- To develop the ability to think critically about what life gives them
- To reflect Mercer values
- To provide broad perspective
- To reflect the desire for educated rather than "trained" graduates
- To provide a foundation for mathematical/ quantitative reasoning
- To provide students with an introduction to critical thinking/critical inquiry
- To provide an integrated education
- To develop the ability for writing and speaking effectiveness as part of the ability to reason effectively

Committee members stated their desire for a unique general education characterized by common elements/outcomes for all students throughout the undergraduate schools and colleges. They committed to the task of proposing student learning outcomes that are stated precisely and that can be assessed. They agreed that student learning outcomes must be flexible enough to allow the faculty of each undergraduate school or college to design appropriate ways for its students to demonstrate that they have attained them.

Mechanisms through which the schools and colleges examined existing general education goals and objectives

Each member of the committee agreed to involve faculty members and deans in their schools and colleges in a review of current general education goals and outcomes and in a discussion of proposed outcomes using the method deemed appropriate by that school or college. Faculty of each college/school were asked whether additional outcomes and goals are needed, whether any existing goals and outcomes should be eliminated or clarified, whether each of the existing goals still makes sense in light of the outcomes desired for their graduates, whether each of the goals and outcomes is stated in terms of what students are able to do and what they will know as a

result of completing general education, whether methods of assessment can be imagined, and whether the general education goals and outcomes might be organized differently or simplified.

Committee members agreed that while the committee is committed to being democratic, it would be difficult for faculty members at the University to look at current goals and outcomes one by one and try to rewrite them. In addition to a review of the current goals and outcomes, committee members asked faculty in their schools and colleges for four or five capacities or habits of mind they believe to be essential. Committee members then looked for commonalities in the lists.

The mechanisms for examining the goals and outcomes in the schools and colleges follow:

The College of Liberal Arts-General education committee and department chairs
Stetson School of Business and Economics-Curriculum committee, full faculty, and Dean
Tift College of Education-ad hoc committee with representatives from each site, full faculty, Dean
School of Engineering-curriculum committee and Dean
Georgia Baptist College of Nursing-Curriculum committee and Dean
College of Continuing and Professional Studies-Department chairs, full faculty, Dean
Townsend School of Music-Curriculum committee, department chairs, full faculty, Dean

University General Education Committee members framed discussions of the proposed statement and outcomes in terms of the following questions:

What are the essential capacities or habits of mind desired for Mercer graduates?
What should general education enable every Mercer student to be able to do and to know?

Accountability, regional accreditation, and federal government interest

The committee studied the role of regional accreditation bodies as well as the interest of the federal government in assuring students, parents, and the general citizenry that colleges and universities are able to provide evidence that their graduates are learning and meeting stated outcomes. The committee noted recent work of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education and the Secretary of the US Department of Education to focus accreditation efforts on student learning and the related “inputs” of colleges and universities.

The committee understands that accrediting bodies and the federal government have determined that it is not sufficient for colleges and universities to demonstrate that they provide *opportunities* designed to produce specified student learning outcomes. Instead, colleges and universities must be able to provide evidence that graduates demonstrate attainment of the specific learning outcomes established by the faculty. Committee members agreed that while external accreditors do not dictate specific student learning outcomes or methods of assessment, colleges and universities are being held accountable with regard to the extent to which students are meeting the institution’s specified general education goals and outcomes. Committee members recognize that Program Review is the process by which accountability, continuous improvement, and quality are ensured.

The University General Education Committee as a whole agrees that colleges and universities must be able to demonstrate that their graduates have learned and achieved the learning outcomes set by the faculty. Much discussion and debate occurred within the committee, however, with

regard to the extent to which the faculty and the educational institution should be expected to do more than provide opportunities for learning. Those dissenting suggest that college-age students must learn to take responsibility for their own actions or lack thereof in order to become liberally educated contributors to society. Other committee members ask how faculty members and the institution are to know that the opportunities provided lead to student learning. Some committee members asked for what the faculty of an educational institution can be reasonably held accountable. All committee members agreed that there must be accountability, that assessment is important for excellence and effectiveness in instruction and curriculum. All committee members agreed that the motivation behind identification of student learning outcomes and assessment of outcomes is the desire to know what students are learning and that assessment is to be accomplished with integrity.

Recommendations for University-wide assessment

Committee members recognize that individual schools and colleges may choose to undertake assessment activities beyond those implemented as University-wide assessment programs. The committee recommends assessment of general education that focuses on outcomes beyond those obtained in specific courses designated as general education courses to the assessment of the outcomes of the larger experience of students at the University.

At the time of its first report to the Provost, the University General Education Committee has examined the Collegiate Learning Assessment Instrument as a measure of student learning in writing, critical thinking, and intellectual growth (analytic reasoning and problem solving) across the schools and colleges of the University. Preliminary discussion has been favorable. The committee will examine the Defining Issues Test as a potential University-wide measure of moral discernment. The committee asks the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine sampling methods to be employed and to schedule assessment early enough for incorporation into course syllabi.

The committee requests financial support for all of its members to attend scheduled conferences during the 2007-2008 academic year to aid in the identification of effective University-wide assessment measures for cultural awareness, moral discernment, and responsible citizenship and to help identify college-specific measures of the four general outcomes and the practical competencies.

*The committee members recommend reading of the full report for a complete understanding of the work of the committee.

Report of the University General Education Committee

November 16, 2007

I. The Charge of the Committee

In October of 2006, Provost Horace Fleming charged the University General Education Committee with examining the general education program (s) in accordance with Core Requirement 2.7.3 of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools' *Principles of Accreditation*, which states:

The institution requires in each undergraduate degree program the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that (1) is a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For baccalaureate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: Humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for course equivalency.

In communicating the charge, Dr. Fleming stated that “in 2010, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools will require Mercer University to review its compliance with the SACS Standards, which will include a review of General Education. Prior to 2010, the University is required to conduct a Program Review of General Education.”

He stated that “the components of the general education program must be “assessable.” To that end, the General Education Committee’s charge will include an examination of the current program (s) to ensure that (1) goals are stated in a way to make them assessable; (2) means suggested for achieving the goals are appropriate, (3) common goals have a common assessment instrument; (4) appropriate assessment activities are undertaken; and (5) appropriate mechanisms exist for periodic re-evaluation of goals, methods of achievement, and assessment.”

II. The Membership of the University General Education Committee

In October of 2006, Dr. Fleming appointed Dr. Priscilla Danheiser, Professor of Human Services and Associate Dean of the College of Continuing and Professional Studies, as Chair of the University General Education Committee. At the request of Dr. Fleming, the undergraduate academic deans nominated faculty members to serve on the committee as representatives of the schools and colleges. The College of Liberal Arts and the College of Continuing and Professional Studies provide the majority of the general education courses for the University, and Dr. Fleming requested that two faculty members from each of these colleges serve on the committee.

The members of the University General Education Committee, their titles, and the colleges and schools they represent follow:

Dr. Jo Ellen Dattilo, Professor, Associate Dean for the Undergraduate Program, Georgia Baptist College of Nursing

Dr. Paul Lewis, Associate Professor of Christianity, College of Liberal Arts

Dr. Karen O'Neill Lacey, Assistant Professor of English, College of Continuing and Professional Studies

Dr. Michael Leonard, Professor, Senior Associate Dean, School of Engineering

Dr. D. David McIntyre, Assistant Professor of Accounting, Associate Dean, Stetson School of Business and Economics

Dr. Margaret Morris, Professor of Education, Chair of Teacher Education for Macon and Eastman, Tift College of Education

Dr. John Simons, Associate Professor of Music, Coordinator of Graduate Music Studies, Townsend School of Music

Dr. Edward Weintraut, Professor of Foreign Language and Literature, Associate Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Dr. Priscilla R. Danheiser, Professor and Associate Dean, College of Continuing and Professional Studies, Committee Chair

III. Reading

The committee began its work by reviewing classic and contemporary writing focused on general education. The readings assisted committee members in exploring the history, meaning, and purposes of general education. The readings follow:

Association of American Colleges. (1985). *Integrity in the College Curriculum: A Report to the Academic Community, The Findings and Recommendations of the Project on Redefining the Meaning and Purpose of the Baccalaureate Degree*. Washington, DC.

Association of American Colleges. (1998). *Contemporary Understandings of Liberal Education*. Washington, D.C: Schneider, C.G. & Shoenberg, R.

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2002). *Greater Expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*. Washington, DC.

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2005). *Liberal education outcomes: A preliminary report on student achievement in college*. Washington, DC.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. (1981). *A Quest for Common Learning: The aims of general education, The Tale of the Spare Room*. Washington, DC: Boyer, E. & Levine, A.

Chenevert, J., Miller, R.R., Roth, J.L., Truchan, L.C. (1998). Developing Intellectual Skills. In J. Gaff, J.L.Ratcliff, & Associates, (Ed.), *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: A comprehensive guide to purposes, structures, practices, and change* (pp. 170-189). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Cronin, W. (1998). Only Connect: The goals of a liberal education, *American Scholar*, 73-80.

Culpepper, A. (2002). *What is a Mercerian?*

Field, K. (2006, December 8). Spellings promised fast reforms in accrediting –Education secretary wants to measure student learning: she pledges cooperation. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, pp. 1, A23.

Golden, D. (2006, November 13). Colleges, accreditors seek better ways to measure learning, *The Wall Street Journal*, p.B1.

Mercer University. (2006). *Mercer University Catalog*. Macon, Atlanta

Mercer University Tift College of Education (2005). *Conceptual Framework*. Macon, GA: Mercer University Tift College of Education Faculty

Ratcliff, J.L. (1998). Quality and Coherence in General Education. In J.Gaff, J. L. Ratcliff, & Associates, (Ed.), *Handbook of the Undergraduate Curriculum: A Comprehensive guide to purposes, structures, practices, and change* (pp. 141-169). San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Seward, Z. M. (2006, October 4). New Harvard Class Requirements Could Include Religion Course, *The Wall Street Journal Online*. Retrieved October 4, 2006, from <http://WSJ.com>

IV. Program review

The Mercer Office of Institutional Effectiveness as a unit of the Office of the Provost coordinates all program reviews for the University including general education and serves as a resource for the University General Education Committee. Program review is one among a number of interrelated processes in place at the University to assure institutional effectiveness in accordance with Mercer’s mission. The purpose is to

provide a systematic means of assuring the continuous improvement of the University's programs.

V. Accountability, regional accreditation, and federal government interest

The committee studied the role of regional accreditation bodies as well as the interest of the federal government in assuring students, parents, and the general citizenry that colleges and universities are able to provide evidence that their graduates are learning and meeting stated outcomes. The committee noted recent work of the Commission on the Future of Higher Education and the Secretary of the US Department of Education to focus accreditation efforts on student learning and the related "inputs" of colleges and universities.

The committee understands that accrediting bodies and the federal government have determined that it is not sufficient for colleges and universities to demonstrate that they provide *opportunities* designed to produce specified student learning outcomes. Instead, colleges and universities must be able to provide evidence that graduates demonstrate attainment of the specific learning outcomes established by the faculty. Committee members agreed that while external accreditors do not dictate specific student learning outcomes or methods of assessment, colleges and universities are being held accountable with regard to the extent to which students are meeting the institution's specified general education goals and outcomes. Committee members recognize that Program Review is the process by which accountability, continuous improvement, and quality are ensured.

The University General Education Committee as a whole agrees that colleges and universities must be able to demonstrate that their graduates have learned and achieved the learning outcomes set by the faculty. Much discussion and debate occurred within the committee, however, with regard to the extent to which the faculty and the educational institution should be expected to do more than provide opportunities for learning. Those dissenting suggest that college-age students must learn to take responsibility for their own actions or lack thereof in order to become liberally educated contributors to society. Other committee members ask how faculty members and the institution are to know that the opportunities provided lead to student learning. Some committee members asked for what the faculty of an educational institution can be reasonably held accountable. All committee members agreed that there must be accountability, that assessment is important for excellence and effectiveness in instruction and curriculum. All committee members agreed that the motivation behind identification of student learning outcomes and assessment of outcomes is the desire to know what students are learning and that assessment is to be accomplished with integrity.

VI. Review of the history, meaning, and purposes of general education

The committee, through reading and discussion, explored the meaning of general education and worked to identify the differences among the terms liberal education, liberal arts, and general education. The committee found the following definitions

presented in the Association of American Colleges and Universities' 2002 report, *Greater expectations: A new vision for learning as a nation goes to college*, useful.

Liberal education: A philosophy of education that empowers individuals, liberates the mind, cultivates intellectual judgment, and fosters ethical and social responsibility.

Liberal arts: Specific disciplines (humanities, arts, social sciences, and sciences)

General education: The part of a college curriculum shared by all students providing a shared intellectual experience for all students. Provides broad study in the liberal arts and forms the basis for developing important intellectual and civic capacities

The committee reviewed the statement of general education as presented in the current *Mercer University Catalog*. The statement describes general education at Mercer University and outlines its purposes:

“The general education program is broad in scope, requiring study in several areas. It affords an introduction to some of the major areas of human knowledge and endeavor, and lays the foundation for continued study and for the student’s contribution to society.”

The catalog introduction to general education goes further to put forth the concept of “paideia” as reflective of dedication “to the ideal of educating the whole person.” The members of the committee affirmed the concept of “paideia” as a guiding principle of general education at Mercer. Committee members agreed, however, to incorporate the concept rather than the term, “paideia,” in the overarching statement of the purpose of general education and in proposed student learning outcomes.

VII. Review of existing general education goals and outcomes and general education programs at Mercer

The committee reviewed the existing general education goals and outcomes in light of the definitions and purposes of general education examined. They reviewed existing goals and outcomes for precision and clarity, for adherence to the University mission, for coherence, and for the extent to which they are stated as student learning outcomes capable of being assessed. Committee members representing two of the undergraduate colleges and schools with external accrediting requirements, education and engineering, consistently reinforced the idea that the more precisely the outcomes can be described, the easier it will be to measure the extent to which our students attain them and the easier it will be for faculty to determine whether a particular course or academic experience supports general education. The committee affirmed that the goals and outcomes must be stated in terms of what students will know or be able to do as a result of the general education program.

The committee determined that some existing goals and outcomes are “bundled.” For example, the committee determined that the goal of “demonstrating broad and general knowledge” would be difficult to assess as a single outcome. Similarly, the outcome of communicating clearly, responsibly, and with integrity suggested to the committee three distinct characteristics of communication desired and implied challenges with regard to assessment.

The existing outcome of mastering “at least the basic principles of mathematical and scientific reasoning” lacked the precision the committee felt necessary for measurement across the various general education programs. The committee determined that the sheer number of outcomes associated with each general goal, especially with numerous incidences of bundling identified, could compromise program review, effective assessment, and the perceived coherence of general education at the University.

The examination of current general education curricula at Mercer highlighted for committee members the significant differences in the ways the general education goals and outcomes manifest themselves in the individual undergraduate schools and colleges.

Students in The College of Liberal Arts satisfy the general education requirement by completing a Common Core of courses as well as by completing 24 hours of credit in the Great Books Program or the Distributional Program. General Education reform, however, is currently under way with the CLA faculty looking to the University General Education Committee for the broad general education outcomes. The School of Music has not yet developed its own general education requirements and offers its students the two general education options of the College of Liberal Arts. The College of Education and the School of Business on the Macon campus offer the two general education options provided by the College of Liberal Arts. The faculty of the School of Engineering recently approved and implemented four general education options for its students. The College of Continuing and Professional Studies offers its students one general education program in the Regional Academic Centers. The College of Education in the Regional Academic Centers requires of its students the general education program provided by the College of Continuing and Professional Studies. While first-year nursing students will return to the College of Nursing in the fall of 2008, currently nursing students come to Mercer having completed much of their general education requirements and the College of Continuing and Professional Studies offers courses in support of the CON general education requirements. While a number of general education options exist within the University, all were developed to reflect the University-wide general education goals and outcomes.

VIII. Revision of general education goals and outcomes

The committee distinguished between a focus on developing capacities necessary to negotiate and contribute to a rapidly changing world (a process approach to general education) and a focus on learning content and examining eternal truths (related to a content or knowledge based approach to general education). Committee members agreed

that it is important that the revised outcomes reflect the University's Quality Enhancement Plan. Committee members agreed with the statements in the current *Mercer University Catalog* that suggest that the general education outcomes should reflect the distinctiveness of the undergraduate schools and colleges and represent "a summary of the central, intersecting objectives and outcomes common to all of Mercer's programs."

Following discussion in the schools and colleges, committee members generated a long list of purposes of general education that reflects both capacities or habits of mind that are to be developed as well as knowledge to be obtained. The list follows:

- To help students promote social integration and prevent social disintegration
- To help students make connections (as in an integrative experience)
- To challenge mainstream culture
- To cultivate respect for others
- To understand tradition as innovation and to understand the importance of keeping roots in tradition
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Committee members stated their desire for a unique general education characterized by common elements/outcomes for all students throughout the undergraduate schools and colleges. They committed to the task of proposing student learning outcomes that are stated precisely and that can be assessed. They agreed that student learning outcomes must be flexible enough to allow the faculty of each undergraduate school or college to design appropriate ways for its students to demonstrate that they have attained them.

IX. Mechanisms through which the schools and colleges examined existing general education goals and objectives

Each member of the committee agreed to involve faculty members and deans in their schools and colleges in a review of current general education goals and outcomes and in a discussion of proposed outcomes using the method deemed appropriate by that school or college. Faculty of each college/school were asked whether additional outcomes and goals are needed, whether any existing goals and outcomes should be eliminated or clarified, whether each of the existing goals still makes sense in light of the outcomes desired for their graduates, whether each of the goals and outcomes is stated in terms of what students are able to do and what they will know as a result of completing general education, whether methods of assessment can be imagined, and whether the general education goals and outcomes might be organized differently or simplified.

Committee members agreed that while the committee is committed to being democratic, it would be difficult for faculty members at the University to look at current goals and outcomes one by one and try to rewrite them. In addition to a review of the current goals and outcomes, committee members asked faculty in their schools and colleges for four or five capacities or habits of mind they believe to be essential. Committee members then looked for commonalities in the lists.

The mechanisms for examining the goals and outcomes in the schools and colleges follow:

The College of Liberal Arts-General education committee and department chairs
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Tift College of Education-Ad hoc committee with representatives from each site, full faculty, Dean
School of Engineering-Curriculum committee and Dean
Georgia Baptist College of Nursing-Curriculum committee and Dean
College of Continuing and Professional Studies-Department chairs, full faculty, Dean
Townsend School of Music-Curriculum committee, department chairs, full faculty, Dean

University General Education Committee members framed discussions of the proposed statement and outcomes in terms of the following questions:

What are the essential capacities or habits of mind desired for Mercer graduates?
What should general education enable every Mercer student to be able to do and to know?

The Georgia Baptist College of Nursing (GBCN). The undergraduate curriculum committee and the Dean of the College of Nursing reviewed initial and subsequent drafts of the general education overarching statement and the student learning outcomes. Because the majority of nursing students have completed general education before enrolling in the college, the undergraduate curriculum committee provided a general statement of support of the professional accrediting organization, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (CCNE), position that recognizes the value of strong liberal arts and science studies to provide the foundation of nursing practice. It is this outcome, providing a base for professional practice, that the College of Nursing selects and assesses as the general education component of its curriculum plan.

The School of Engineering. During the Fall 2005 semester, the curriculum committee (Guerry Backer, Marjorie Davis, Sinjae Hyun, Laura Lackey, Laura Moody, Philip Olivier, Lauren Sumner, and David McClellan) of the Mercer University School of Engineering (MUSE) carefully reviewed the Mercer University General Education goals, objectives, and competencies as it developed a new set of general education requirements for the School of Engineering. The MUSE Curriculum Committee was supportive of the existing set of university general education goals, objectives, and competencies, and the

Curriculum Committee sought to develop new MUSE General Education requirements that would be consistent with these university goals, objectives, and competencies. In February 2006, the MUSE faculty unanimously approved the new MUSE General Education Requirements in part because they were supportive of the existing Mercer University General Education goals, objectives, and competencies. When the current University General Education Committee completed its new university general education preamble, outcomes, and competencies in early May 2007, the Dean of Engineering, Dr. Dayne Aldridge, and the chair of the MUSE Curriculum Committee, Dr. Laura Lackey, reviewed these drafts and endorsed them. These statements were presented to the MUSE faculty as a whole on August 16, 2007 at the MUSE Faculty Development Workshop. The faculty expressed its support for the work of the University General Education Committee and made no suggestions for revisions or additions.

The College of Liberal Arts. The College has proposed a General Education curriculum that is built around capacities for critical inquiry, quantitative modes of knowledge, competence in foreign language, negotiating a variety of cultural and moral discourses and depth of reflective understanding. It is, however, looking to the University General Education committee for University-wide general education goals and outcomes. Associate Dean Weintraut presented the proposed general education opening statement to the department chairs at a retreat in August of 2007. Dr. Weintraut presented the responses of the department chairs to members of the University General Education Committee, and subsequent discussion resulted in the incorporation of the suggestions into the opening statement. During the 2006-2007 academic year, the College of Liberal Arts General Education Committee reviewed and discussed various drafts of the proposed preamble statement, outcomes, and competencies. In general, with regard to the existing general education goals and outcomes, the CLA committee agreed that there are too many goals, that they are bundled, and that they can be enhanced. Dr. Paul Lewis distributed the current draft of the statement and learning outcomes to the new College of Liberal Arts General Education Committee in the fall of 2007.

The Tift College of Education. Dr. Margaret Morris distributed the proposed overarching statement and common student learning outcomes to faculty representatives of the College's Macon, Douglas, Eastman, and Henry sites, to the Dean, and to the Tift College of Education faculty as a whole for comment and suggestions. Tift faculty members were positive in their responses and had no suggestions for the initial work of the committee.

The College of Continuing and Professional Studies. The College of Continuing and Professional Studies deliberately courted faculty responses about general education across the University by including the topic on agendas for faculty and departmental meetings throughout academic year 2006-2007 and during the fall of 2007. Faculty members engaged in vigorous debate both interpersonally and publicly about the subject, encouraged in that effort by Dean Kail. The Dean expressed both his approbation of the preliminary statement on general education and student learning outcomes and his continued support for the committee's ongoing effort. Suggestions from CCPS departments included a request for the incorporation of a responsibility for action tied to

civic responsibility, that there be more specificity in outcomes, that the idea of preparation for life-long learning be made obvious, that spirituality be considered, that the committee consider inclusion of a reference to leadership, and that the committee report speak directly to expected competencies/outcomes with regard to written and oral communication. The committee believes that it has incorporated these recommendations into its proposal. Reports from departments within the College-Counseling and Human Sciences, Liberal Studies, Information Systems, and Mathematics and Science- indicate that discussion of ideas emerging from the University General Education Committee is widespread.

The Townsend School of Music. During the Fall 2006 semester, the Townsend School of Music curriculum committee reviewed the Mercer University General Education goals, objectives, and competencies as it explored the relationship between the newly formed Townsend School of Music and general education requirements for the undergraduate programs of the University. During the Spring 2007 semester, the Dean, Undergraduate Director, and Graduate Director endorsed the basic working statement being developed by the University General Education Committee. This was also given to all TSM faculty members via email, and responses were positive. In the Fall 2007 semester, the new curriculum committee consisting of John Simons, Douglas Hill, and Stanley Roberts as well as the TSM department chairs (John Simons, Douglas Hill, Stanley Roberts, Martha Malone, Montey Cole, Robert Parris, and David Johnson) reviewed the work of the University General Education Committee and were supportive of the proposed general statement and outcomes: intellectual growth, cultural understanding, civic responsibility, and moral discernment. The faculty leadership (Interim Dean, Graduate and Undergraduate Directors, and Department Chairs) expressed support for the work of the University General Education Committee and made no suggestions for revisions or additions. The TSM leadership conveyed its hope that work continues on the general education program and that the goal of measurement of the general education outcomes is to benefit all Mercer undergraduate students rather than to prepare for an accreditation visit.

The Stetson School of Business and Economics. The faculty of the Stetson School of Business and Economics supported the work of the General Education Committee initially by discussing the charge of the General Education committee during the Spring of 2006. At a separate meeting, the faculty discussed the current general education goals and outcomes listed in the Mercer University catalog. The faculty overwhelmingly responded that the most pressing need from the School of Business and Economic'' perspective was a focus on communication skills. In general, the faculty views the general education curriculum as the basic communication, analytical, and other liberal arts training a student needs to accept successfully coursework in the School of Business and Economics. Subsequent work of the General Education Committee was relayed to the faculty by Dr. David McIntyre. In the fall of 2007, Dr. Priscilla Danheiser and Dr. McIntyre met with Interim Dean Mounts to discuss further the work of the General Education Committee and to field any unrecorded input or concerns.

The committee members agreed that while most students in the College of Nursing and in the College of Continuing and Professional Studies come to Mercer having already completed much of general education, Mercer will be accountable for our graduates having met the goals and outcomes of general education whether they come to us as transfer students or as first-year students. Concern about responsibility for transfer students was a topic of discussion in the College of Liberal Arts as well. Committee members noted that assessment data and assessment reports will allow us to examine differences between our graduates who matriculate only at Mercer and those who transfer to the University.

X. The Statement of General Education at Mercer University

After review of the Tift College of Education Conceptual Framework, committee members embraced the idea of an overarching statement for general education that would reflect similar organizing principles and the commitment to a transformative education. The overarching statement of general education proposed by the University General Education committee follows:

Mercer University's founding vision, articulated by Jesse Mercer in the 1830s, dedicates us to promote free inquiry, religious liberty, and inclusiveness-values consonant with Baptist heritage. University President William D. Underwood underscored that vision in 2006, noting that "...the extent to which a university transforms the lives of individual students, who in turn transform their communities, represents the ultimate measure of a university's greatness." To put this transformative vision into practice within the communities we serve, a Mercer University education emphasizes experiences that infuse *intellectual growth, cultural understanding, civic responsibility, and moral discernment* with practical competencies.

The distinctiveness of their programs and traditions notwithstanding, Mercer University's undergraduate colleges and schools share learning outcomes that reflect Mercer's mission to educate the whole person. These undergird the General Education Curricula, which provide the necessary foundation for disciplined study and lifelong learning.

General Education is designed to help students cultivate and refine habits of mind that prepare them to contribute constructively and meaningfully to society. To realize this goal, General Education strives to instill in persons broader perspectives while empowering them to find fuller and richer citizenship in a world in which different cultures, social institutions, and technologies intersect in multiple and diverse ways.

XI. Four Outcomes of General Education

A Mercer education emphasizes experiences that foster *intellectual growth, cultural understanding, civic responsibility, and moral discernment*. These four interrelated capacities inform the intended outcomes for general education.

Intellectual Growth

Cultural Awareness

Civic Responsibility

Moral Discernment

Intellectual growth may be interpreted to include complexity of thought, integrative and synthesizing ability, quantitative analysis, qualitative analysis, critical inquiry, critical reflection, creative expression, integration of life and learning experiences, self understanding and knowledge, and capacity for continued learning and intellectual growth.

Cultural awareness may be interpreted to include global perspective, intercultural perspective, empathy, perspective taking, engaging the other, cultural appreciation.

Civic responsibility may be interpreted to include active responsible citizenship, the ability to engage with problems and issues, civility and respect, collaboration and working in teams, and caring.

Moral discernment may be interpreted to include judgment in ambiguous situations, academic integrity, ethical reasoning, ethical behavior, and the ability to act upon reflectively-held convictions.

These broad learning outcomes are achieved, not in the abstract, but in and through the exercise and development of certain specific practical competencies that are infused in these four outcomes of general education.

Communicating effectively in writing in a variety of modes and settings

Communicating effectively orally in a variety of modes and settings

Reasoning quantitatively

Integrating coherently diverse perspectives with knowledge

Acting perceptively and responsibly in light of the education one has received

As required by the University's accrediting body, general education programs at Mercer will constitute a minimum of 30 semester hours to include credit hours in humanities/ fine arts, social/ behavioral science, and science/mathematics.

XI. Recommendations for University-wide assessment

Committee members recognize that individual schools and colleges may choose to undertake assessment activities beyond those implemented as University-wide assessment programs. The committee recommends assessment of general education that focuses on outcomes beyond those obtained in specific courses designated as general education courses to the assessment of the outcomes of the larger experience of students at the University.

At the time of its first report to the Provost, the University General Education Committee has examined the Collegiate Learning Assessment Instrument as a measure of student learning in writing, critical thinking, and intellectual growth (analytic reasoning and problem solving) across the schools and colleges of the University. Preliminary discussion has been favorable. The committee will examine the Defining Issues Test as a potential University-wide measure of moral discernment. The committee asks the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to determine sampling methods to be employed and to schedule assessment early enough for incorporation into course syllabi.

The committee requests financial support for all of its members to attend scheduled conferences during the 2007-2008 academic year to aid in the identification of effective University-wide assessment measures for cultural awareness, moral discernment, and responsible citizenship and to help identify college-specific measures of the four general outcomes and the practical competencies.