ASSOCIATE IN ARTS TASK FORCE REPORT   -   FALL 2002

In the Fall of 2001, Chancellor of UH Community Colleges Joyce Tsunoda formed a Task Force of Community College faculty and administrators to review and update the UHCC Associate in Arts Degree. The effort was launched to facilitate compliance with new accreditation expectations that competencies be operationalized to facilitate improved assessment. Additionally, given the history of problems of transferring A.A. credits within the UH System, the Task Force decided to include effective articulation and transfer of UHCC general education credits as a major focus.

The Associate in Arts Degree Program at UHCC campuses is a two-year program that prepares graduates for transfer to four-year baccalaureate programs - principally to four year UH campuses.

The last major revision of A.A. competencies was completed in November of 1990 with the release of *Associate in Arts: Student Degree Level Competencies*.

Periodic reviews of degree requirements and expected competencies are essential if degrees are to address the evolving needs of society.   As Hawaii, the country, and the world deal with ever accelerating change, degree programs must be adjusted to prepare graduates for the changing environments in which they will operate. A number of factors contributed to the decision to review UH A.A. Programs, including:

I.   The Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) 2002 adoption of new accreditation standards.   Broad student outcome goal statements are expected to be replaced by statements of specific expected learning outcomes/competencies so that goal attainment can be assessed. Assessment findings are then expected to be utilized to continuously improve student and institutional performance.

II.   The new WASC standards, simultaneously, require all institutions to develop, maintain, and evaluate general education components for all degrees with requirements to demonstrate competence in a variety of specified areas.

III.   Major changes in General Education Core and Graduation requirements at the principal four year transfer institution in the University of Hawaii System - UH-Manoa became effective in the Fall of 2001. The revised UHM General Education requirements reduce the number of required "core" courses and greatly liberalize the previously restrictive core definition criteria.   The A.A.Task Force, therefore, had to consider revising competencies while, simultaneously, working to streamline the UH articulation/transfer process.

IV.   An ongoing effort to facilitate fluid transfer of General Education coursework and programs between all UH campuses.

V.   Internal desires to restate competencies so student outcomes can verify actual student performance and provide guidance in program evolution.

VI.   The presence of a new UH President (Evan Dobelle) and the consequent reorganization of the University System to embrace a culture of excellence and performance. President Dobelle's recently released Strategic Plan calls on UH to ensure *a fully articulated, integrated, and comprehensive liberal arts foundation and to assess student outcomes to improve student learning.*

GLOBAL GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS

The General Education requirements of the UHCC Associate in Arts Degree are designed to ensure that all graduates receive a foundation in the diverse skills and subject areas of the arts and sciences. A high quality General Education Program focuses upon in-depth learning through *multiple exposure* to concepts/skills in courses that stress active student involvement in the learning process.

While **specific competencies** were to be developed for all major components of General Education, the Task Force continued to embrace the broader *Themes of Common Learning* (developed in 1990 document) and long term educational goals that should be nurtured across the curriculum. While these goals may prove difficult to assess, the Task Force recognized that they must continue to be included as General Education Outcomes. (Note: numerous concepts borrowed from the American Academy of Liberal Education - *http://www.aale.org*/)

The *Themes of Common Learning* include the development of:

- **Critical reasoning/cognitive skills (Thinking)**

  Ability to recognize and to think clearly about important issues and questions. The ability to reason effectively includes certain foundational skills or abilities (e.g., fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication, mastery of the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning), as well as higher-order capacities for formulating, analyzing, integrating, and applying arguments and information.

- **Communication skills (Communicating)**

  Graduates will possess written, oral, listening, analytical, and technical communication skills to effectively express themselves in an array of social settings.

- **Comprehension and Knowledge (Knowing)**

  Graduates should possess a rich array of meaningful and useful knowledge, as well as the ability to compare and integrate new or different areas of knowledge in fruitful ways. An institution's general education curriculum should impart a broad foundational knowledge, aesthetic sense, and ethical/value-based appreciation of the various liberal arts and sciences.

- **Application of conception/communicative skills (Using)**

  General Education skills must, ultimately, prove useful to graduates as they navigate their social, family, and career paths. "Using" experience can be built into the curriculum through internship and service learning opportunities.

- Added to these traditional "themes" are information retrieval and management skills (traditional, technological, computer literacy) and a variety of personal skills (teamwork, cooperation, self management, responsibility).

The UH Community College A.A. graduate will be prepared to use these skills for a lifetime of learning, thoughtful and responsible citizenship, service to family and community, ethical conduct, and as an economically productive member of society.

Finally, the impact of UHCC A.A. General Education Program should represent more than simply the sum of its parts. General Education designated courses are not simply introductions to fields of study; they should also develop the student's capacity for independent, innovative thought. Ultimately, UHCC A.A. graduates should better understand, deal more effectively with, and be prepared to improve the world in which they live.

While specific courses in the "core" General Education areas may not serve to develop all of the broader competencies, these "threads" will appear across the fabric of every Community College's Associate of Arts General Education Program assuring that graduates possess the specific area competencies (displayed in sections below) and the broader competencies listed above.

MAXIMIZING COMMONALITY WHILE MAINTAING AUTONOMY – THE SEAMLESS WEB

Given the flexibility of the new UH-Manoa General Education Requirements (the primary transfer institution for UH Community Colleges), the Task Force considered an array of approaches to achieve consensus on what is expected of UHCC A.A. degree recipients.

Ultimately, the Task Force gravitated to General Education models like those of Minnesota and Maryland where general education competencies are clearly defined, minimum distribution requirements are enforced, and where clear criteria are applied to qualify courses for core area designation. However, a key feature of both of these models is the flexibility provided to individual campuses to autonomously develop curricula through which students may fulfill the general education requirements.   In short, individual campuses use shared General Education criteria to self-identify courses that qualify as core fulfilling.

This flexibility maximizes the autonomy of each institution and ensures that unique faculty talents are tapped in developing the general education curriculum.

To facilitate the transfer of courses fulfilling General Education Requirements, the Task Force endorses a model that ensures that courses certified by a campus as fulfilling General Education requirements may be transferred in any of three ways:

1. The entire General Education Core can be transferred and the student will have completed General Education Core at any UH receiving institution.

2. A completed component of the General Education Core can be transferred and the student will have completed that component of General Education Core at any UH receiving institution.

3. A course designated as meeting a part of a General Education Core can be transferred and the student will receive credit for a course in that area of the General Education Core at any UH receiving institution.

ADOPTION OF A UH SYSTEMWIDE GENERAL EDUCATION CORE

While the Task Force wishes to maximize campus autonomy in designating courses into General Education Core areas, the realities of transfer within the UH System dictate that the General Education Requirement areas at the different campuses maintain a degree of uniformity.

The Fall 2001 changes to the UH-Manoa General Education Program effectively reduce Manoa's General Education distribution requirements and facilitate greater flexibility in designating core fulfilling courses. The Task Force recommends that the UH Manoa General Education Requirements serve as the "skeleton" (minimum) of General Education Requirements at all UH campuses.

Since all other UH campuses currently require as many or more credits in each of Manoa's new General Education Core areas, the adoption of the UHM model as a systemwide minimum core distribution requirement at all UH campuses will not force any campus in the system to add categories or areas to its existing general education program.

A proposal to adopt a system approach to a UH General Education Program has been developed by the UHCC Council of Community College Chairs. The general principles of that proposal (attached document) are endorsed by the Task Force.

STRUCTURAL SUPPORT FOR GENERAL EDUCATION

The Task Force also recognizes that an array of structural support mechanisms must be in place if we wish to ensure the development of the General Education competencies in our graduates.

Some of these important support factors include:

1. Centrality of General Education in the college's mission statement
2. Strong support from campus and system leadership (administrative and faculty)
3. Maintenance of an environment supportive of academic freedom
4. Establishment and maintenance of appropriate curriculum entrance and course pre-requisite standards to ensure that students are prepared for the General Education curriculum
5. Sufficient funding to ensure that the depth and breadth of courses are scheduled to provide students appropriate general education options
6. Effective teaching is supported and rewarded by the institution
7. Maintenance of an academic community that periodically reviews the General Education Program to ensure coherence, interaction, and evolution
8. Class sizes are set and adjusted to provide appropriate learning environments
9. Senior faculty are encouraged to participate in the teaching of introductory courses
10. Library, computer, lab, and other such resources are regularly maintained and upgraded
11. General education integrated into co-curricular programs

GENERAL EDUCATION AREA COMPETENCIES

The Task Force organized subcommittees to revise competencies for **specific areas** of our A.A. General Education requirements, including:

- Written Communication
- Quantitative/Logical Reasoning
- Global/Multicultural Understanding
- Humanities & Arts
- Social Sciences
- Natural Sciences
- Oral Communication

MANDATE TO ASSESS STUDENT OUTCOMES

As mentioned earlier, this year's major revision of the WASC Accreditation Standards mandates that WASC institutions develop and adopt assessment strategies:

> *The institution identifies student learning outcomes for courses, programs, certificates, and degrees; assesses student achievement of those outcomes; and uses assessment results to make improvements. (Standard II – WASC)*

A coherent general education program is required for all degree programs and the general education outcomes must be stated and measured:

> *General education has comprehensive learning outcomes for the students who complete it, including the following:*
>
> *a. An understanding of the basic content and methodology of the major areas of knowledge: areas include the humanities and fine arts, the natural sciences, and the social sciences.*
>
> *b. A capability to be a productive individual and life long learner: skills include oral and written communication, information competency, computer literacy, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis/logical thinking, and the ability to acquire knowledge through a variety of means. (Standard II - 3 – WASC)*

A.A. Task Force members worked with their campuses to develop awareness of the new accreditation expectations and to begin the design of assessment activities.

Windward C.C. has allocated funding, developed an assessment plan, trained faculty in various assessment techniques, and conducted several preliminary general education assessment studies.

Faculty and administrators from all campuses of the UHCC System have attended workshops and conferences on general education. Several campuses have launched assessment projects and all campuses are developing assessment plans/committees.

GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES

Competencies for Written Communication

Effective writing is a core skill for all A.A. graduates. Graduates must be prepared for the written communication expectations that await them at their transfer institutions and in their careers/lives.

The following assumptions underlie the competencies in written communication required for an Associate in Arts degree.

1. Written communication skills and the reading skills necessary to develop them are not learned in a sequence of discrete units; they develop through consistent practice in using language in varied situations and in increasingly complex ways.

2. Community colleges provide varied and demanding opportunities in many disciplines for students to practice and acquire complex communication skills.

3. Community college AA graduates must meet the expectations and requirements of the language communities they will encounter, including work settings and upper division college programs for baccalaureate degrees.

Candidates for the Associate in Arts degree should demonstrate the ability to do the following:

1. Think clearly, logically, and inventively.

2. Engage in discussions and critically assess ideas.

3. Identify a writer's implied as well as literal meaning.

4. Summarize, analyze, and evaluate written works.

5. Gather and evaluate information purposefully from electronic and print sources.

6. Use writing to discover, develop, and support ideas.

7. Produce writing whose form, organization, syntax, diction, style and tone are appropriate for a given audience, subject, and purpose.

8. Write a research paper that supports a thesis, integrates expert opinions from various sources, and documents sources appropriately.

9.   Revise, edit, and proofread for correctness, clarity and effectiveness.

10.   Develop a personal voice in written communication.

Competencies for Mathematical/Logical Reasoning

In the course of their academic experiences, Associate in Arts degree students will increase their knowledge of mathematical/logical reasoning. This will enable students to appreciate applications; and propose, formulate, and evaluate arguments. Students will learn to apply mathematical/logical reasoning to help them make decisions in their lives and careers.

Candidates for the Associate in Arts degree should demonstrate the ability to:

1.   Manipulate symbols within a logical system and use symbols to express abstractions.

2.   Choose and apply appropriate modeling strategies, which include arithmetic, algebraic, statistical, estimation, inductive and/or deductive reasoning techniques.

3.   Choose and implement an appropriate problem solving process. Evaluate the results and communicate the solutions within the framework of the original problem.

Competencies for Global/Multicultural Perspectives

Global and Multicultural Perspectives courses provide thematic treatments of global processes and cross-cultural interactions from a variety of perspectives. Students will gain a sense of human development from pre-history to modern times through consideration of narratives and artifacts of and from diverse cultures. At least one component of each of these courses will involve the indigenous cultures of Hawai'i, the Pacific, and Asia.

A. A. graduates need to understand the history, geography, and cultures of societies with which we will interact. As the world "shrinks," graduates will increasingly interact with individuals and cultures from disparate parts of the planet.

To increase students' understanding of the growing interdependence of nations and peoples and develop their ability to apply a comparative perspective to cross-cultural social, economic and political experiences, the A.A. graduate should be able to demonstrate, through writing, discussion and other means, that they can do the following:

1.   Distinguish the characteristics of the world's major civilizations in their geographic settings.

2. Develop a sense of historical time.

3. Describe the interactive roles that social, religious, political, economic, scientific and technological forces have played among the civilizations of the world.

4. Trace the development of traditional civilizations and recognize their enduring influences.

5. Discuss the historical dimensions of contemporary world affairs and issues.

6. Describe global processes (e.g., agricultural and urban revolutions, emergence and growth of civilization, human migration, disease, ecological forces, imperialism, neo-imperialism, de-colonization, industrialization, etc.).

7. Compare and contrast responses of the world's peoples as a result of intercultural contacts and the diffusion of ideas, institutions and inventions.

8. Draw upon their knowledge of the varieties of human experiences, and their sympathetic understanding of cultures other than their own to define their roles as citizens of the contemporary world.

9. Express informed judgments on the behavior of peoples and their institutions.

10. Analyze cause and effect as they relate to cultural developments.

Competencies for Humanities & Arts

A.A. graduates should be prepared to probe the meaning of human experience and imagine how that experience could be altered.

A knowledge of the history, social settings, values, and perceptions of other subcultures, cultures, and nations will broaden the A.A. graduate's appreciation of different ways of organizing social life and looking at the world.

Exposure to the arts and humanities increases the repertoire of ideas, images, and sounds that graduates understand and appreciate. Training in criticism enables graduates to better form and analyze personal reactions to various art forms and develop educated tastes and values.

When a student completes an Associate of Arts Degree at any UH Community College, as a result of having taken the required humanities courses, the degree recipient should be able to do the following:

1. Demonstrate an understanding of the humanities as a collection of disciplines that study human nature, culture, attitudes, and accomplishments.

2. Recognize the shared elements, conflicts, and affirmations of human existence.

3. Critically examine the values of one's own culture as well as the values of

cultures that are separated in time or space from one's own.

4. Express and demonstrate the value of taking responsibility for one's own creations, assertions, decisions and values.

5. Demonstrate an ability to listen, acknowledge, and express the varying viewpoints of others**.**

6. Communicate an understanding of the value of participating in intellectual and aesthetic pursuits.

7. Express and demonstrate the importance of continuous inquiry in the pursuit of knowledge.

8. Recognize the ambiguities and richness of human languages.

9. Recognize the uses and limitations of applying analytical skills to the resolution of human problems and dilemmas.

10. Analyze and propose solutions to issues that may not have simple or singular solutions.

11. Recognize the importance of responding appropriately to change as an essential human activity.

12. Demonstrate an understanding of the common human bonds that encourage a sense of civic purpose and responsible citizenship.

Competencies for Social Science

The A.A. graduate should understand the structure and dynamics of groups of human beings and be able to study group behavior.

The study of the development of human institutions and practices through time will increase the graduate's understanding of how earlier societies met challenges and adjusted to changing circumstances.

Learning how a given social science gathers and interprets its data causes the graduate to understand that good public decisions depend on adequate information about issues.

Hawaii has one of the most diverse/multicultural environments in the world. Ethnic and cultural diversity is increasing the norm across the country. An understanding of different cultures is essential for 21st century graduates.

When a student completes an Associate of Arts Degree at any UH Community College, as a result of exposure to a variety of social scientific courses, the degree recipient is expected to do the following:

1. Possess and use the vocabulary associated with social scientific disciplines.

2. Understand and apply a variety of core social scientific perspectives, concepts, and principles.

3. Write essays/papers that merge creative, critical thinking skills with social scientific paradigms and perspectives.

4. Read and then demonstrate (oral/verbal) understanding of social scientific articles/papers n diverse social issues.

5. Distinguish between subjective personal opinions, social group biases, objective empirical findings, and between data and ideology; develop personal and social responsibility; and adhere to the ethics of social scientific investigation.

6. Evaluate and critique research designs, qualitative/quantitative data collection methods, and the resulting conclusions.

7. Use an array of resources - including electronic (computers, software, internet, electronic library resources) – to gather, analyze, and interpret data.

8. Demonstrate information assessment skills in selecting reliable and valid social scientific sources.

9. Demonstrate (written/oral) an understanding, sensitivity, and appreciation for human and cultural diversity.

10. Provide and demonstrate service to the community (through co-op education, internship, practicum, or service learning projects).

Competencies for Oral Communication

Definition of the Oral Communication Discipline (UH CC SYSTEM)

The general education course in Oral Communication employs as its core the definition of communication studies developed and adopted by the Association for Communication Administration.

> Definition: *The field of communication focuses on how people use verbal and nonverbal messages to generate meanings within and across various contexts, cultures, channels, and media. It promotes the effective and ethical practice of human communication*.1

Core Components

Oral Communication courses should include at least 12 (80 percent) of the following core components in order to qualify as a general education course.

1. Communication theory and the communication process
2. The role of personal perception in communication
3. The role of communication in critical thinking and decision making

4. Listening
5. Verbal communication (language)
6. Nonverbal communication
7. Audience analysis and adaptation
8. Situational analysis and adaptation
9. Communication confidence
10. Development and organization of messages
11. Message types (relational, informative, persuasive, etc.)
12. Message expression (choice and effective use of appropriate communication channels and
13. media)
14. Analysis and evaluation of verbal and nonverbal messages
15. The role of research in facilitating informed communication
16. Communication ethics

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1 This definition was developed at the Defining the Field of Communication Studies Conference sponsored by the Association for Communication Administration in cooperation with the National Communication Association, July 28-30, 1995. Please note that the term communication has supplanted the term speech in many departments and courses. Moreover, the Speech Communication Association has changed its name to the National Communication Association.

General Education Oral Communication Core Course Areas

The following basic-level Oral Communication courses could qualify as general education courses at UHCC campuses if they include at least 12 (80%) of the
aforementioned core components:

- Introduction to/Fundamentals of Communication (intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, and public communication)
- Public Speaking/Presentation Speaking/Public Address
- Interpersonal Communication
- Small Group Communication/Group Discussion
- Business and Professional Communication/Organizational Communication
- Argumentation and Debate

Other courses that include at least 80 percent of the 15 core components may qualify as
general education Oral Communication "Focus" Courses.

Although many of these courses focus on understanding and developing
communication competencies, others have more of a theoretical focus that
concentrates on understanding, analyzing, and appreciating the role of communication
in personal, professional, and societal relationships.

Note: This document does not require institutions to include speech communication courses in
their general education curriculum. However, when institutions do include speech
communication courses in the general education core, such courses must adhere to the standards
advanced in this document.

General Education Oral Communication Competencies

Regardless of how a UH Community College campus decides to approach the development of speech communication (Oral Communications Core Requirement, Oral Communications Focus Requirement), all Associate of Arts recipients should be able to demonstrate the competencies listed below.

After each competency statement, specific behaviors are listed that a student should demonstrate in order to be considered competent.

1. **The Communication Process**
   Competent communicators can demonstrate knowledge and understanding of:
      a.   the variables influencing the communication process,
      b.   the effects of personal perception on the quality and effectiveness of communication,
      c.   the influence of the speaker, the audience, and the situation on communication choices,
   and
      d.   the role of communication in critical thinking and decision making.

2. **Verbal and Nonverbal Communication**
   Competent communicators can
      a.   select, effectively use, and adapt to different forms of verbal and nonverbal communication,
      b.   use language and nonverbal communication that respects and adapts to listeners' backgrounds and individual differences, and
      c.   give constructive verbal and nonverbal feedback through effective listening behaviors.

3. **Message Development and Organization**
   Competent communicators can
      a.   identify message types by their communication goals,
      b.   generate ideas and select appropriate message components,
      c.   select appropriate and effective channels and media for communication,
      d.   research and select appropriate supporting material, and
      e.   choose appropriate and effective organizing methods.

4. **Audience and Context Analysis**
   Competent communicators can
      a.   analyze and adapt to different sizes and types of audiences, and
      b.   analyze and adapt to different contexts (situations, occasions, settings).

5. **Expression**
   Competent communicators can
      a.   manage communication anxiety and apprehension,
      b.   transmit messages using delivery skills suitable to the purpose, audience, and setting,
      c.   speak clearly and expressively, and
      d.   demonstrate nonverbal behaviors that support the verbal message.

6. **Listening**
   Competent communicators can

      a.   receive, interpret, and appropriately respond to verbal and nonverbal messages, and

      b.   identify the main ideas and supporting materials in a message.

      c.   attend with an open mind, and

      d.   identify and use different listening skills appropriate for diverse listening situations.

7.   **Analysis and Evaluation**
Competent communicators can

      a.   distinguish among statements of fact, inference, and opinion; between emotional and logical arguments; and between objective and biased messages,

      b.   effectively analyze and evaluate the content and delivery of verbal and nonverbal messages, and

      c.   express opinions and ask questions constructively.

8.   **Ethics**
Competent communicators can

      a.   exercise personal responsibility in making communication decisions, and

      b.   discuss ethical issues associated with effective communication in society.

Competencies for Natural Science

The sciences study the physical character of the universe and the nature of its living organisms, including the human species.

Learning to use the scientific method will expand a graduate's knowledge and understanding of the universe.

Observation of the natural world leads to theories, from which hypotheses are generated. These hypotheses are then tested against empirical data collected by systematic observation and experimentation. Science enables the graduate to better understand the world.

Science and Technology play an increasingly direct role in today's world. All graduates, no matter what careers they choose, will face decisions both in their personal lives and in their capacity as citizens, that will call for an understanding of scientific and technological issues. Increased experience in analyzing questions from the point of view of Science or Technology will help our graduates deal with these issues later in life.

As a student completes the requirements or an Associate of Arts degree at any of the community colleges in the University of Hawaii system, the student should have acquired the ability to:

1.   Demonstrate an understanding of basic, general scientific laws, theories and concepts form the biological and physical sciences through specific application to given situations, including;

      a. how and in what context they were formulated and are applied, and

      b. their universality (i.e., cutting across time and cultural boundaries).

2.   Demonstrate an understanding of the philosophy and history of science, including the   concepts that:

   a.   Scientists use creativity, curiosity, objectivity, and skepticism to arrive
        at conclusions;
   b.   The free exchange of ideas and willingness to discard concepts which are no longer valid, are
        central to the success of the scientific enterprise;
   c.   The theories, concepts, and laws arising out of scientific investigation have limitations;
   d.   The experimental results used to support theories, concepts, and laws
        must be repeatable;
   e.   the historical context of scientific ideas is important to their understanding;
   f.   The pervasive effect of science in society results form the powerful
        nature of scientific inquiry.

   g.   Demonstrate an understanding of scientific laws, theories, concepts, and data by
        being able to:

        a.   Evaluate information presented in the media;
        b.   Use and apply them appropriately and understand their limitations;
        c.   Determine the validity of experimental procedures;
        d.   Devise experiments to test hypotheses;
        e.   Interpret data and results of experimentation.
        f.   Relate cause and effect and recognize when no such relationship exists.

4.   Through a hands-on laboratory experience, apply the knowledge base and tools of
        science, including the proper use of:

        a.   The scientific method;
        b.   Mathematics;
        c.   Scientific terminology;
        d.   Critical reading and analysis;
        e.   Clear and concise writing.

This report resulted from the collaboration of UHCC faculty and administrators who served on an Ad Hoc UHCC A.A. Task Force from the Fall of 2001 until the Fall of 2002. The report was approved by the Task Force at its final meeting on December 13, 2002.

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