

Idaho State UNIVERSITY

General Education Requirements Committee

921 South 8th Avenue, Stop 8070 • Pocatello, Idaho 83209-8070

May 11, 2015

Re: General Education Assessment

Dear Colleagues,

Over the last year, the General Education Requirements Committee (GERC) has crafted a plan for the assessment of ISU's general education courses and program. This activity is required both by the SBOE and by the NWCCU, which highlighted deficient general education assessment as an area of primary concern in its recent accreditation report. This spring GERC representatives reached out to their respective units to collect input on a draft plan, and we thank all the participants in those meetings for their thoughtful hearing and comments. Some suggestions have already been incorporated into the current plan, and more feedback will guide our continuing efforts to refine the program's later stages. For now, the current version of the plan has been approved by Academic Affairs, and we will begin to implement it this fall.

So: GERC humbly requests that departments submit course assessment plans for all general education courses by October 1, 2015. (Please submit electronically to fsenate@isu.edu, with the subject line: **Gen Ed Assessment Plan for [course+number]**). We intend to review and approve these plans by the end of the fall, to ask departments to enact them in Spring 2016, and to start collecting basic reporting on assessment activities in Fall 2016. These and later stages in the full program are outlined in the attached plan, in which a rudimentary template for course assessment plans is included as Appendix II.

We would like a separate plan for each general education course, and each one should do the following:

- Describe specific instruments used to assess each of the learning outcomes that define the general education objective. These learning outcomes can be found in Appendix I of the attached plan. Each outcome that a course aims to achieve should typically be assessed by direct evaluation of student work, and specific examples of exam questions or writing assignments should be provided.
- Detail the procedure by which assessment instruments and data are collected, interpreted, and retained. On what schedule is assessment performed? How is student work graded consistently? What forms of summary assessment data are compiled?
- Outline the process by which assessment data are used within the department to improve the course. When, by whom, and to what effect are assessment data internally reviewed?
- Address any major differences in assessment practices among various sources of course credit (including distinctive sections, ECP classes, and exam credit).

Some learning outcomes and course formats are easier to assess than others, and we anticipate that this process may identify challenges such as learning outcomes that could be simplified without compromising the spirit of their intent. Although GERC has no authority to independently change the learning outcomes of the state-defined GEM categories (Objectives 1-6), we welcome productive suggestions submitted alongside departments' best efforts to assess the current learning outcomes.

GERC will review submissions and work with departments to make sure satisfactory course assessment plans are in place for implementation in Spring 2016. During that term, as departments begin (or continue) the business of general education assessment, GERC's primary task will be to develop an efficient reporting system for these activities, and I hope we will be in touch a year from now with details on inaugurating that process in Fall 2016.

We recognize that the assessment expectations of the NWCCU and SBOE impose a lot of work on busy people, and GERC's highest priority is to meet our accreditation obligations with a program that respects faculty expertise in assessing their own courses. Accordingly, our guiding principle in crafting this plan has been to preserve the primary authority for general education course assessment in departments, with the hope that many can essentially continue or expand current assessment procedures with minimal disruption. Please feel free to contact me or your unit's GERC representative with any questions or suggestions.

Sincerely,

Andy Holland

Incoming Chair, General Education Requirements Committee (GERC)