

# Eastern Oregon University

## University Learning Outcomes Report

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Friday 18 September 2009—University Learning Outcomes Exercises

### Context

For the past decade, Eastern Oregon University (EOU) faculty in Academic Affairs have demonstrated diligence and engagement in developing program goals / objectives and in refining measurable learning outcomes statements for the General Education Core (GEC) curriculum and Degree Program curricula. Similar activities have occurred in Student Affairs through the Student Learning and Outcomes Assessment Project begun in 2006 (SLOAP). Although the institution has a University Assessment Plan developed in 1999 and updated by an ad hoc University Assessment Committee in 2007, the levels of assessment inherent within the plan have not been broadly understood or systematically implemented.

The collaborative work of EOU's faculty and administration on September 18 builds upon the recent work of the Education Policy and Curriculum Committee (EPCC) to develop learning outcomes statements and pilot assessment rubrics, and of Degree Programs to review and implement learning outcomes assessment cycles. An inventory of EOU's university curriculum at this point in time reveals remarkable coherence which now needs to be articulated institutionally. A framework that will enable EOU to articulate broad curricular goals for its students will enable curricular alignment and systematic assessment that is low-impact for faculty, yet efficiently and effectively helps professors, programs, and the institution document the a continuum of student learning from first year to graduation.

### Description—Exercise #1

To articulate and gain faculty buy-in to a University Learning Outcomes framework, leadership convened all teaching and library faculty at the beginning of the 2009-2010 Academic Year 1) to review where we are as an institution in identifying GEC and Degree Program learning outcomes, 2) to generalize from EOU's inventories and AAC&U LEAP essential learning outcomes what learning outcomes EOU expects for all students, and 3) to begin to articulate a large curricular (and co-curricular) framework to encompass learning outcomes embedded throughout the university curriculum.

Faculty from the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Education, and the College of Business were divided into eight (8) heterogeneous groups of approximately 10-12, plus an online group, to abstract university learning outcomes from GEC and Degree Program outcomes. The 90 faculty who participated (80 on campus and another 10 online, or 72% of the faculty) and 7 administrators were given copies of EOU's mission statement, a draft lower-division curriculum inventory of GEC learning outcomes (program *and* breadth outcomes), a draft inventory of Degree Program learning outcomes, AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) essential learning outcomes, and AAC&U's research on those learning outcomes and assessment practices employers would like colleges and universities to emphasize more. In addition, a distillation of the existing GEC rubrics (that included the recommended changes to the

Inquiry and Civic Engagement rubrics submitted to EPCC in May 2009) and a paraphrase of AAC&U metarubrics for Degree Program outcomes were provided to put before the faculty common understandings of learning outcome traits. A designated Faculty Leader then partnered with an Administrator to guide each group in an hour-long exercise and discussion of the resource materials.

Each group worked independently with the resource materials to distill areas of overlap and to identify learning-outcome gaps in EOU’s curriculum. This work was informed by external source materials derived from AAC&U’s interviews with hundreds of faculty and employers across the nation. In an hour-long discussion period that followed, each Faculty Leader reported out the results of the exercise.

### Analysis—Exercise #1

In the reporting-out phase, a few areas of overlap between GEC and Degree Program learning outcomes were identified as university-wide learning outcomes all EOU graduates should attain. Specifically, Critical Thinking and Communication were most commonly reported by the following groups:

Group	ULO 1	ULO 2	ULO 3	ULO 4	ULO 5
1	Communication	Critical Thinking	Applied Prob-Solving	Creative ...	Personal/Social Responsibility
2	Communication	Critical Thinking	Inquiry	Teamwork/Collab	Connected
3	Civic	Cultural	Critical	Creative	Like AAC&Us 4 categories w/ EOU personality
4	Communicate effectively	Think, analyze, synthesize critically & creatively	Demonstrate proficiency in one or more disciplines	Demonstrate social responsibility through multicultural understanding	Synthesize AAC&U’s 4 ELO categories
5	Communication	Critical Thinking	Apply skills to real-life situations	Teamwork	Personal integrity & ethics
6	Core skills (communication, critical thinking)	Knowledge: of Physical & Natural World & Human Cultures	Integrative Inquiry	Application	
7	Communication	Critical Thinking-Problem-solving	Inquiry	Content Knowledge	
8	Creative & Critical Thinking	Reflect, Process, Synthesize, Apply Knowledge	Ethical Reasoning and Cultural Engagement	Collaborative Communication	

The exercise accomplished three things, at least—it enabled faculty to share their understanding of learning outcomes evident in the curriculum, to see a holistic configuration of EOU’s learning outcomes in GEC and Degree Programs, and to enter national conversation about learning outcomes 21<sup>st</sup> century students need universities to emphasize.

The outcome of the discussion, which included reference to AAC&Us nationally recognized “Essential Learning Outcomes” categories, resulted in a modification of the afternoon’s exercise to give an “EOU flavor” to the broad AAC&U categories.

**Description—Exercise #2**

Groups were combined to work on Exercise 2. Specific instructions were to try to use the idea of “Cs” from Group 3 as a strategy for giving an EOU flavor to LEAP categories (ELOs). Each group was assigned one area in which to design a ULO outcome. Groups were tasked to:

1. Find the appropriate GEC linkage
2. Find the appropriate Program linkage
3. Speculate on co-curricular responsibility
4. Finalize bullets under each

The afternoon assignments were made and groups were given 40-45 minutes to get the larger group to a starting place for further discussion:

Group	ULO
<b>1&amp;2: Cultural Competency</b>	Breadth of knowledge that inspires lifelong learning and curiosity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All GEC courses</li> </ul>
<b>3&amp;4: Critical and Creative Thinking &amp; Communication</b>	Inquire, Create, and Communicate <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to effectively communicate and act upon critical and creative modes of inquiry</li> <li>• Ability to effectively acquire, analyze and synthesize information</li> </ul>
<b>5&amp;6: Civic Engagement</b>	Community Engagement and Personal and Social Responsibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• GEC—Engagement with diverse discourse communities and acts in inclusive ways within a group</li> <li>• Co-Curriculum—Club involvement, SART, athletics, service projects, study senior?, distance ed—community engagement</li> </ul>
<b>7&amp;8: Connections &amp; Interconnections</b>	Integrated Learning (found mostly in degree programs and co-curriculum rather than GEC due to the complex nature of the learning) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pragmatic applications</li> <li>• Cross-disciplinary connections</li> <li>• Process-based learning</li> </ul>

**Analysis—Exercise #2**

The majority of the groups felt constrained by beginning a ULO outcome statement with a “C.” One group felt strongly that it was important to retain language (such as Integrated Learning) that had already gained traction and definition within the assessment community and among faculty at hundreds of colleges and universities across the nation over the past 20+ years. Although there was not enough time to do the kind of fine-tuning that comes with further discussion, editing, and wordsmithing, a framework for University Learning Outcomes is beginning to emerge, and strong

and weak areas in the curriculum are becoming more visible as we continue to align the curriculum towards clearly articulated goals for EOU students upon graduation.

### Assessment and Recommended Next Steps

61/80 on-campus faculty participated in the assessment of the day’s activities. This number constitutes about half of the faculty overall, and about 75% of on-campus faculty who participated in either the morning, the afternoon, or both exercises. Below are the results of the assessment. Participants sometimes responded by marking more than one answer, or by responding candidly. These responses are all reflected in the table and text below:

Question	A. I really do want to know more about how to help my students achieve EOU’s learning outcomes.	B.I’m starting to understand how this all works!	C. Why do we have to keep doing this stuff?	D. Horsefeathers!	(E.) Write-in
1. When I hear the phrase “learning outcomes assessment,” I think to myself,	24	32	6	2 Nah—“Animal Crackers”	Run and hide We’ve already done this before Oh, God! Not another meeting!
	A. understanding the larger picture of assessment at EOU.	B.appreciating colleagues who are knowledgeable and enthused about student learning and outcomes assessment.	C.feeling befuddled and confused.	D. thinking, “Horsefeathers!”	E. Write-in
2. I arrived a skeptic this morning, but I leave this afternoon [although many edited that they did not arrive a skeptic]:	27	28	6	2 Nah—“Duck Soup”	I could have used time to prepare for classes, none of the above, why 4 hours for what takes ½ hour? How diverse the ways faculty from different disciplines think and work are Weary
	A. it might be fun to have more opportunities to talk to colleagues about what 21 <sup>st</sup> century students should know and be able to do.	B. a clearer understanding of how my program fits into the university curriculum.	C. renewed enthusiasm for the teaching profession.	D. Oh, horsefeathers!	E. Write-in
3. The biggest takeaway for me today was:	31	21	3	5 Nah—“A Night at the Opera”	This is going to take a lot more work and even more meetings to make real progress Greater appreciation for colleagues Words—just words

## **Recommended Next Steps for Programs (these will take more categorization and synthesis):**

- Define statements presented, develop descriptions, identify courses where they are taught, develop matrices
- Keep improving what we're already doing well
- Carefully reflect on how our curriculum works and be prepared to make rational changes
- Tighten courses, outcomes and co-curriculum
- Identifying more ULOs and how they integrate into my specific discipline
- Return to authentic teaching and learning driven by commitment to research
- Integrate the "civic engagement" [outcome] successfully into music performance classes (How do we get students into the community?)
- Review degree programs in the context of these goals (ULO) to update/harmonize
- Clarify the terms, too touchy-feely for my taste
- Rethink how our courses fit into ULOs
- Have more time to work as program when not overwhelmed by tasks of everything else
- To try to reconcile the actual activities involved with true care and guidance to our students with assessment tools
- Provide written feedback about today's progress. Allow further participation in the development process.
- Clarification of terms, processes, and the "next step"
- Follow through on ways to conduct service learning through community engagement. Practical application of subject matter.
- Connect the dots/bullets/etc.
- Meet with Liberal Studies Task Force; begin to identify outcomes for that program
- Clarify and simplify the ULO/LEAP goals
- Consolidate/delete duplications. Move on
- Refine specific ULOs
- Clearer delineation of learning outcomes (program outcomes) and in which course they are specifically addressed
- I think most programs already do meet these stated outcomes—we just need to codify them
- Align ourselves more with the ULO and help students understand how it all works
- Do more direct assessment in classes
- Identifying program outcomes that plug into the draft ULO assessment statements
- Clarify ULO goals in smaller forums
- Personalize the ULOs to reflect EOU's sense of place, regional support, and then walk back through the GEC and PLOs to find resonance or gaps
- A critical review of program courses, detailing specific outcomes, comparing those to ULO and adjusting accordingly
- Definition of and communication of the curricular goals
- Review our program to better reflect what we have indicated [in] our outcomes
- Keep on doing good stuff
- I don't think we need to do anything, as our students are already achieving these outcomes
- Consistent and expanded communication and involvement as link within, and past the college experience
- Program, course, syllabus alignment
- Update, refine our program
- Focus on product
- Need to study classes in our program to see how they are helping to achieve the goal of EOU's ULO's
- I think we're already doing this in more meaningful ways
- My program has no major, so it is not directly relevant
- Evaluate data from the previous years' assessment to inform appropriate changes
- Keep doing an excellent job as faculty
- Go back and reassess our PLO—refine as needed
- Admin should simply tell us what they want it to look like so we can save time

- Further conversation
- Mapping exercise and just doing it
- Getting clear understanding of the ULOs
- Continue to participate and convey information as it is developed to students
- Refine current assessment tools
- I don't think my program needs to take steps to achieve this. I think we need to do a better job explaining why we already meet these goals
- I need to understand what these goals are in depth
- Some consistency in outcomes. Outcomes must be assessable and consistent
- Clarify how our Gen Ed/Program courses fit into the four ULOs—talk to each other about how the ways we teach communicate the ULO values

### **Recommended Next Steps for administrative leadership (these will take more categorization and synthesis):**

- Continue being part of the conversation/development of ideas/clarification
- Leave us alone to work and trust us to do it well
- Don't shift gears once we get started; give us enough time to do a good job
- Tell us up front what you're looking for
- Give specific directions, and examples of what is needed, or what the administration wants to see—how to go about it.
- Continue to budget adequate time & provide assistance in understanding what is needed from program areas (this has improved MUCH in recent years)
- Continue to work hard and thoughtfully
- Just tell me what to do and I'll do it. Don't make me sit through more meetings
- Outline a procedure that takes us from start to end
- Strengthen informal opportunities to discuss—“jitters”-type food accessibility—self-organizing systems more than structured
- Workshops like this
- Continue open dialogue with faculty
- A clear delineation, in a written format, of what to do next
- Besides \$? Just provide a good ear and objective perspective
- Keep defining our university learning outcomes as clearly and persuasively as you did today—bravo!
- Transparency. If we need to craft ULOs to align to LEAP, tell us and we'll do it. Knowing our ultimate objectives from the get-go
- Provide moral support and expertise to Liberal Studies Task Force as we begin the “job” ahead of revamping LS!
- Generate a clear and simple statement of what we have accomplished and what our goals are
- Do the paperwork and deliver drafts before the next work session
- Continue to encourage/allow collective input
- I liked the productive meetings we had last year, where the interviews resulted in documented forms already filled in
- Draft ULOs—discuss them in small meetings
- Write-up the summation of today
- Perhaps departmental meetings—to align priorities; thank you for your good work
- Building the website with the drop-down menus will be the key to success
- Refrain from the “massive group” work—smaller groups are better
- Give us more info on LEAP and the goals of LEAP—who is involved, how did it come about—move fast before we forget all about this
- Keep us in interdisciplinary small groups, task-directed activities
- Directing Deans or Chairs to complete such reviews
- Accepting collaboration with colleagues

- Post all assessment information on the EOU website, so that we can see the progression of the discussion over the past 3-4 years
- Keep meetings and tasks focused
- Clearly outline instructor expectations and offer constructive feedback—keep us informed☺
- Summarize today’s work (Good!)—then provide another forum for discussion and consensus
- Be Nice!
- Just give us the list
- N/A
- Provide time to accomplish the task outlined above
- Use our time more effectively
- Have easy access to information
- Listen
- Facilitate group activities
- Doing it for us—just kidding. We can do it
- Even though the process is difficult for us to buy into, without it we would not buy into it. Thanks for the communicative approach
- Horsefeathers
- Keep me informed please
- Take our feedback and work with it
- Be true to the language of and spirit of the draft ULOs and provide time to continue the discussion
- Seemed like a lot of time (expense) to get faculty to “own” perfectly good outcomes already developed . . . as their own

#### 21 September 2009—Spotlight on GEC Learning Outcomes

Friday’s inter-college ULO exercise was followed by Monday’s debriefing on GEC learning outcomes pilots conducted in 2008-09 (Content, Communication, Inquiry) first with EPCC, and then with the inter-college faculty at large. This resulted in an engaging conversation in both venues about learning outcomes definitions and the usability of existing GEC rubrics. The most compelling questions had to do with the process for revising rubric language so that it was more flexible and therefore more adaptable when used by variety of disciplines.

Donald Wolff (Professor of English/Writing) encouraged faculty to provide him with input on the Communication rubric, and it was determined that the GEC Gateway category would pilot the existing Communication rubric again in Fall 2009 so as to model good practice in “closing the loop” on any changes to the rubrics.

Jeff Johnson (Professor of Philosophy) recommended that “Content” not be assessed within the context of GEC, but that it be relegated to the purview of Degree Program assessments. This recommendation will be taken up by EPCC for further discussion.

Carol Lauritzen (Professor of Education and Associate Dean of the College of Education) presented the results of the Inquiry pilot and recommended language changes to the rubric that better aligned with Inquiry traits nationally. These changes were accepted by EPCC. Another outcome of the Inquiry pilot revealed misunderstandings and misapplications of the rubric. To assist the faculty in understanding how Inquiry traits could be assessed in a variety of disciplinary ways, Dean Lauritzen and Nancy Knowles (Professor of English/Writing) organized a series of three Inquiry workshops to demonstrate best practices in guiding student Inquiry. Jessica Plattner (Professor of Art) presented on Inquiry in the Arts, Miriam Munck and Donna Rainboth (Professors of Education) presented on Inquiry in the Sciences, and Lorna Williamson (Professor of Chemistry) presented on Process-Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL). The assessments from these workshop sessions have yet to be tabulated.

22 September 2009—Where are we now? Review and Update

Provost Michael Jaeger hosted a luncheon with Discipline Representatives, Division Chairs, Deans and Associate Deans, Director of the Library, and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs. The AVPAA provided a written draft of the ULO exercise, and Provost Jaeger provided a dashboard schematic as a roadmap for today's discussion with faculty assessment leaders (25 assembled). In his review and update of where we are now with learning outcomes assessment, Provost Jaeger referred to the dashboard (see attachment) to delineate relationships between GEC, Degree Program, and Co-Curricular learning outcomes as they enable students to scaffold their learning towards meeting University Learning Outcomes. He raised awareness on issues Discipline Representatives and Division Chairs will need to continue to define in the upcoming year:

- **GEC**—Rubrics for breadth in GEC need to be reworked in accord with pilot recommendations, and sampling needs to continue.
- **GEC**—The levels articulated in the GEC rubrics (Developing, Adequate, Proficient) may not mature students to proficiency levels in all of the GEC outcomes—how will the university deal with that fact?
- **Degree Programs**—What Degree Programs reported were active goals and learning outcomes now needs to move to 1) implementation of the stated assessment cycle and 2) a discussion of levels of achievement and identification of where particular outcomes occur in programs.
- **Co-Curriculum**—The Provost reviewed the five domains in the Student Affairs assessment portfolio
- **ULO**—The Provost reviewed the language working faculty groups came up with on Friday, explaining that from the vantage point of ULOs, faculty can review their curricula to identify where we are assessing and documenting, and identify gaps and how to address them in Degree Programs or in GEC

The Provost reminded everyone present that the point of assessment is to have a *process* to inform what our practice is.

### Next Steps

In a discussion that ensued, faculty and administrators made the following observations or raised concerns:

- Civic Engagement is weak in the GEC and Program curricula
- Some learning outcomes have official and colloquial meanings—are faculty going to have trouble with [and so experience confusion about] official or colloquial meanings?
- It takes a cycle to figure out what we're talking about in terms of learning outcome definitions and traits
- Rubrics have to be flexible enough to allow for flexible interpretations by Programs
- Faculty need enough definition of learning outcomes for guidance—with an expanded definitions, it's easy to see it in one's program (example from Modern Language and Global Cultures program)
- About the overall ULO structure discussed on Friday, the GEC should mesh with the ULO categories because GEC is undertaken by *all* students—so why aren't they exactly the same?
- The university also wants students to do things they can't get in GEC (i.e., Degree Program and Co-Curricular outcomes)



- ULOs are a large philosophical document—when we figure that out, we’ll figure out how to assess it, but with the clarification that the assessment is embedded in GEC and Degree Programs, and that the ULOs will not be assessed separately from the curriculum
- General understanding that we need broad understandings about ULOs in order to identify problems and close the loop to fix any gaps in the curriculum
- Most Degree Programs acknowledge they have to review and reinforce abilities on top of GEC
- Most agree the broad ULO categories are in the university curriculum
- A question was raised—what if students don’t gain proficiency in the outcomes—do they not graduate?
- An observation that faculty need further conversation about what the levels mean—developing, adequate, proficient, and additional levels in the Degree Program continuum (like “reaffirm proficiency, practice, perform”) in degree programs mean
- How will we, as an institution, check to make sure students have attained the ULOs? (an IR question)
- Civic Engagement is a gap in the curriculum—it’s an outlier in the ULOs. Maybe we just need an institutional requirement—we need to do something about it (Jeff Johnson’s encapsulation of the assessment process)
- What’s the process going to be for 1) identifying the “outliers” 2) explaining what to do about it, and 3) closing the loop (the process is the assessment process)
- The Provost, Deans, AVPAA will begin to re-engage with the programs in small group meetings to review the portfolio for 2009-2010

Particular observations were made to enable preparation for another round of Program Portfolio Reviews and to complete assessment cycles in preparation for a re-visit from NWCCU (GEC and DP assessments need to continue in Fall):

**It makes sense to have the ULOs first and then to map the Degree Program outcomes to it.**

The process we will use to complete operational language for the ULOs by November that will carry EOU through the next couple of years is as follows:

1. ULOs as written will go back to EPCC for formatting, grammar, and wordsmithing (without changing the intention of the small and large working groups on Friday)
2. EPCC will send out a Draft of the ULOs to all faculty (on campus, on site, online), Faculty Senate, and University Council
3. EPCC will concurrently notify Divisions and Colleges as an information item that it will come before Faculty Senate on such-and-such a date
4. The Provost, Deans, AVPAA, DCs and Discipline Representatives will continue to meet and collect assessment data from GEC samplings and Degree Program assessments
5. The AVPAA will send Discipline Representatives the updates to their Degree Program Portfolios by Friday this week, and will work with Angie and Kris to arrange DP meetings throughout October

In a concluding question, Tony Tovar (Professor of Physics) asked an insightful question: how do the ULOs relate to a vision statement for the University? Does it replace a vision statement?, whereupon the Provost had occasion to connect the dots from ULO work back to the goals, themes, and mission of EOU that would be coming forward vis a vis Strategic Planning.