PROPOSAL TO ADOPT UNIVERSITY-WIDE LEARNING OUTCOMES
Fall 2019

Introduction
At the last external accreditation review of Iowa State University by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC), the lack of clearly-defined university-wide Student Outcomes was identified as an area of concern. In addition to having outcomes identified, HLC criterion 4 requires that institutions assess student learning outcomes and use the results of those assessments to improve student achievement of those learning outcomes. To resolve this problem, the Faculty Senate Outcomes and Assessment Committee (a committee of the Academic Affairs Council) was charged with the following: 1) review the current outcomes, goals, and assessment practices of ISU’s undergraduate academic programs and 2) develop a set of overarching learning outcomes that are consistent with the current outcomes, goals, and assessment practices. The overarching university-wide outcomes proposed would apply to all undergraduate students at ISU, and individual colleges would be charged with attaining the appropriate artifacts that assess the achievement of these learning outcomes by students in a manner that is appropriate to each college or discipline, following recommended best practices.

This proposal recommends the adoption of four university-wide student learning outcomes in the areas of Communication, Information Literacy, Critical Thinking & Problem Solving, and Global Citizenship for endorsement and approval of the Faculty Senate.

Process
The Faculty Senate Outcomes and Assessment (OA) Committee, composed of representatives of all ISU colleges and from the Provost Office, reviewed current student learning outcomes described in the University Catalog and in published college documents to assess the breadth and scope of outcomes for each college. These outcomes were compared within and among colleges, and this comparison assisted in the identification of common learning outcomes among all undergraduate degree programs. The OA Committee’s objective was to propose overarching learning outcomes for all ISU undergraduate students that would be acceptable to satisfy HLC university-wide outcomes requirements, and are consistent with learning outcomes and objectives that have been adopted by ISU colleges. The four university student learning outcomes identified were developed based on the existing outcomes stated for each college and are designed to synthesize those objectives into a set of general learning outcomes that would be beneficial to all students. These learning outcomes have been reviewed and approved by the Academic Affairs Council, and are now presented to the Faculty Senate for review and approval.

The proposed university-wide learning outcomes that follow have also been presented in the accompanying document in more detail (including specific language used by each college where available), providing the information used to develop them, and the rationale of how these recommended outcomes were determined by the Committee.

Proposed University-Wide Learning Outcomes
The following four areas have been identified as common learning outcomes that the Committee feels are consistent with those presently used by colleges; these also align with the present university academic requirements for all ISU undergraduate students in the areas of communication (English 150 and 250), information literacy (Library 160), and U.S. Diversity and International Perspectives.
1. Communication

Outcome: Students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor’s degree will have acquired knowledge and skills to communicate effectively in their field of study.

Students will be able to effectively communicate information using written, oral, visual and electronic forms of communication.

**Institutional goal:** Every student (100%) graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor’s degree will have been exposed to some form of communication training. Eighty percent (80%) of graduates with a bachelor’s degree will meet or exceed expectations set forth by the individual colleges from which a student will hold a degree.

2. Information Literacy

Outcome: Students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor’s degree will have acquired knowledge and skills in information literacy.

Students will be proficient at acquiring, interpreting, and synthesizing information from multiple sources within and beyond their field of study.

Evidence of proficiency in information literacy may be demonstrated at the college and department or program level. In addition to completing the required Library 160 course, each college or program is encouraged to select courses that their graduates are expected to complete in order to demonstrate proficiency in the information literacy outcome more specific to the given discipline.

**Institutional goal:** Every student (100%) graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor’s degree meets the proficiency in information literacy based on a passing (S) grade in Library 160. Eighty percent (80%) of students meet or exceed the expectations for information literacy within their discipline based on either direct or indirect assessment.

3. Critical Thinking and Problem Solving

Outcome: Students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor’s degree will have acquired knowledge and skills to demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking and problem solving as appropriate to their field of study.

Students will be able to generate, acquire and evaluate information based on scientific evidence, creative processes, and/or logical and ethical reasoning to a) design a system, component, and/or process to meet desired needs within realistic constraints such as economic, environmental, social, political, ethical, health, safety, manufacturability, and sustainability and/or b) make decisions, solve problems and synthesize in one’s personal, professional and community endeavors.

**Institutional goal:** Every student (100%) graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor’s degree will have been exposed to some form of critical thinking/problem solving training. Eighty percent (80%) of
graduates with a bachelor’s degree will meet or exceed expectations set forth by the individual colleges from which a student will hold a degree.

4. Global Citizenship

Outcome: Students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor’s degree will have acquired knowledge and skills to be effective citizens in a culturally diverse global community.

Students will gain an appreciation of the importance of having a global perspective on issues involving the role of human society, with its various complex functions and relationships. This includes developing a fundamental understanding of political, economic, social, and cultural differences seen within the global community, and having the ability to analyze and evaluate issues within society in an informed, open-minded, just, and ethical manner. Students will have an understanding and appreciation of diversity in all of its forms (ethnic, racial, country of origin, cultural, economic, etc.) and have developed skills to become engaged, vibrant, and responsible citizens that can contribute constructively to society, at the local, national, or global levels.

Institutional goal: For students graduating from Iowa State University with a bachelor’s degree, at least 80% of students will meet or exceed the expectations assessing understanding of global citizenship for direct assessment; and if applicable, 80% agree or strongly agree they have achieved outcomes based on indirect assessment survey questions.

Proposed Assessment Methods
Given the four stated learning outcomes, a variety of assessment methods have been proposed using both direct and indirect assessment methods, along with best practices and Value Rubrics suggested by The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU), and other assessment metrics. These potential methods of assessment for the university-wide outcomes are explained in the accompanying OA Committee Report, and are intended to provide information for colleges to establish mechanisms to include the assessment of these outcomes in concert with other college- or program-specific outcomes assessments already in use. These data will fulfill reporting requirements for ISU’s accreditation report with the HLC, as well as being used for other evaluative actions, such as external review of departments, or for academic program review required for certification or other program approvals.

Follow-up Actions
Upon approval and adoption of university-wide learning outcomes for undergraduate students at Iowa State University by the Faculty Senate, there is a subsequent need for revision of the Faculty Handbook, Section 10.7.2 to bring the language of this section into alignment with current assessment practices being done at the university, and to better reference the adopted learning outcomes. Specific recommendations for revision of Section 10.7.2 will be submitted to the Faculty Senate in cooperation with the Governance Council in the near future following adoption of the proposed learning outcomes included in this document.