



Achievement-Centered Education

UNL's General Education Reform Initiative

ACE FAQs #3 **28 September 2007**

Why an initial ACE Committee?

The preliminary work of reviewing proposed courses to populate the ACE Program will be large. Current members of the Undergraduate Curriculum Committee were not appointed to or selected for those roles with this task in mind—nor did they agree to serve with this task in mind. Creating a temporary initial ACE committee—with representation from the undergraduate colleges—allows those colleges to select individuals with the specific task of reviewing the anticipated large number of preliminary proposals for ACE certification. This will allow UCC to continue with its present principal charge of exercising oversight of the curriculum proposal process. Having non-voting representation from UCC on the initial ACE committee facilitates the eventual transfer of responsibility to a subset of UCC.

Why require a unanimous vote from the initial ACE committee and from the eventual UCC ACE sub-committee?

This levels the field for the undergraduate colleges, offering each college the same authority and responsibility. Without that, some colleges were calling for proportional representation based on the percentage of all ACE-certified courses which came from each college. Such a system would create a real imbalance of power, giving as much as 70% or more of the seats to one college and as little as no seats—or perhaps 1 seat—to other colleges.

Why assess the general education program? Doesn't this suggest a fundamental distrust of faculty?

All programs at the University are assessed, not because we don't trust ourselves, but because assessment data allow us to demonstrate our successes, improve our efforts, and be responsive to those to whom we are accountable (e.g. our students, Nebraska taxpayers, the Board of Regents, the Postsecondary Coordinating Commission, various accrediting bodies). It is important to note that the proposed assessment plan is focused on an institutional-level assessment of ACE rather than on a faculty or section-level assessment. UNL faculty members are best situated to make—and already make—daily lesson assessments, semesterly course assessments, and regular program assessments. ACE—as a program that cuts across departments and colleges—requires an assessment system that will give the institution the data to know whether the program is in fact helping students achieve the Learning Outcomes.

Why give the responsibility for assessment to the University-Wide Assessment Committee?

The University-Wide Assessment Committee (UWAC) is made up of representatives from each of the undergraduate colleges as well as Libraries and Student Affairs. These individuals have been assigned by their deans/vice chancellors with assessment responsibilities for each of their respective units. Most are associate deans charged with responsibility for assessment in their colleges; some are faculty members who chair their college assessment committees. The current process for documenting the assessment of undergraduate majors involves these individuals. Each UWAC member is asked to collect data and compile a report of the assessment activities for the college and its undergraduate majors every other year. These reports are then submitted to the institution. Each of these individuals currently has working relationships with Director of Institutional Assessment, so there is clear communication link about assessment expectations and needs at all levels (institutional level, college level, department level). All but 2 of the 8 colleges have a college assessment committee comprised of sampling faculty representatives. These committees review and provide feedback on assessment activities at the department and/or college level.

Because this structure already exists for documenting and gathering assessment of the undergraduate major and because this committee is already experienced with institutional-level assessment, it can provide a smooth transition for sharing the responsibility for the assessment of ACE. In addition, having a group of individuals who are in the best position of knowing the details of efforts to assess the undergraduate major could assist in the integration of this understanding into assessment of the ACE learning outcomes.

Why re-certify courses?

Two problems associated with the present Comprehensive Education Program (aka CEP or ES/IS) are (A) the number of courses listed which are no longer taught or are taught so infrequently or irregularly now that students cannot actually count on them and (B) the courses which have over time drifted away from their earlier focuses that were more clearly connected to the program. Re-certifying courses provides the departments and the University with regular opportunities to reconsider the fit between the content of a course and the Learning Outcomes.

Why are we getting Proposal 1 again? Didn't we already approve Proposal 1?

While Proposal 1 was approved last year by each of the eight undergraduate colleges, significant feedback was also offered at that time that suggested the proposal could be strengthened. GEAC believes that the modified version of Proposal 1 is better for students and more viable than is the previous version. Because it has been changed, GEAC is again seeking approval from the colleges.

How will the ACE committees decide whether to certify a proposed course?

See ACE FAQs #4—coming soon.