

Adelphi University

College of Arts and Sciences

Comprehensive Assessment Plan

Approved by Vote of Faculty

February 17, 2014

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### **Philosophy of the College of Arts and Sciences**

When Adelphi College was founded in 1896, it was committed to the belief that all frontiers of learning could be advanced. It was the challenge of each succeeding generation of students to learn from the great minds of the past and, when the lessons were learned, to go beyond them. This continuum of learning, in which the past comes alive and the future becomes enabled by it, has been Adelphi's mission from its inception.

As Adelphi University has developed over more than a century, it has maintained this philosophy of liberal education—most centrally in the College of Arts and Sciences. It is here that the University offers its students not merely learning in specific disciplines, but the liberal education that permits the disciplines to be seen in proper perspective. In addition to offering specialized study, the College of Arts and Sciences offers to explore something else: Why?

Arriving at this “why” is the obligation of the humanities, those studies that preserve and interpret the intellectual and cultural heritage of the world throughout the centuries. Literature is part of this heritage, as are philosophy, history, fine arts, music, dance and drama, language and linguistics, the social sciences, interdisciplinary studies and the bedrock sciences of chemistry, biology, physics, and mathematics. Each of these fields is studied on its own terms and with its own goals, which often include solid practical application and career opportunities. But they also interrelate with and illuminate each other in vital ways.

The skills that a student develops in the course of a liberal education are those that are proper to each field in which she/he studies—fluency in languages, adeptness in mathematics, competence in the employment of chemistry, and so forth—but there are also powers, which one may call skills, that cut across all disciplines: research competence, analytical skills, critical thinking, and the ability to express verbally and in writing what one has learned. These are the components of a liberal, humanistic education.

The faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences would have its students develop in the broadest possible manner. Classroom learning is a part of the student's education, but that learning should always be pushing the student beyond the classroom, stimulating him or her to explore that which has yet to be revealed. Thus the student is encouraged to pursue original research, to undertake collaborative work with peers and mentors, to study in a variety of internships both here and abroad, and to avail himself or herself of the opportunities that the University offers to meet visiting artists, scholars, and world figures.

This is the College of Arts and Sciences' way of bringing about the promise of the University's motto, “The truth shall make us free.”

## **College Assessment of Student Learning**

Assessment of the student learning experience provided by the College of Arts and Sciences follows from this mission and its purpose, values and expectations. The College plan is a combination of policies and procedures that allows the faculty and administration of the College to ensure that it is fulfilling its mission and serving its students with a meaningful, appropriate and effective learning experience that will satisfy the educational objectives set forth by the College and its degree programs.

Assessment, furthermore, affords the College and its faculty and students the opportunity to reflect formally on and measure the effectiveness of their engagement in a defined and directed learning experience that has clear and consistent goals. In addition, systematic formal reflection on the outcomes of the learning experience provides faculty and administration with guidance regarding curriculum and pedagogical development.

The College's accrediting body provides guidance to the University and College with regard to assessment of the student learning experience. The Middle States Commission on Higher Education is Adelphi's primary accrediting body which requires "that it [the University] assesses both institutional effectiveness and student learning outcomes, and uses the results for improvement; . . . ."<sup>1</sup> Middle States asks its member institutions to embrace Standards emphasizing that: "Educational courses, programs, and experiences are not static constructs. Their creation and lifespan may be characterized as part of a dynamic four-step cycle: 1. Developing clearly articulated written statements of expected learning outcomes; 2. Designing learning experiences that provide explicit opportunities for students to achieve those learning outcomes; 3. Implementing appropriate measures of student achievement of key learning outcomes, . . . ; and 4. Using the results of those assessments to improve teaching and learning, . . . ."<sup>2</sup>

It is with this cycle in mind that the College has developed its Comprehensive Assessment Plan, and which has informed the development of general and specific program learning goals, expected outcomes and related assessment measures.

### **Adelphi's General Learning Goals and the College**

The College has adopted the University's general education learning goals as fundamental to its learning experience. These goals are addressed in various ways throughout the College in all of its majors, program concentrations and individual courses. The College houses the University's General Education program including its Freshman Seminars which are designed to provide a distinctive introduction to the University's learning experience.

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<sup>1</sup> Characteristics of Excellence in Higher Education: Requirements of Affiliation and Standards for Accreditation, Middle States Commission for Higher Education, 2006, p. iv.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40.

The program directly addresses the Middle States Standard requirements that the institution provide General Education as a core learning experience over the course of the baccalaureate degree. Middle States requires that: “The institution’s curricula are designed so that students acquire and demonstrate college-level proficiency in general education and essential skills, including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, and technological competency.”<sup>3</sup>

The current general learning goals of the undergraduate programs of the College as expressed through the General Education Learning Goals are the following:

- **Communication** is the clear, coherent interchange of ideas with a particular purpose and audience, using written, oral, and/or electronic means. Note that the development of students' communication skills may be either an explicit goal or an implicit, yet essential, component of instruction.
- **Critical and Integrative Thinking** is the ability to identify, evaluate, and construct arguments and proposed solutions to problems. Students should be able, through logical analysis and synthesis, to categorize information, distinguish between relevant and irrelevant data, and predict outcomes.
- **Quantitative Reasoning** is the ability to understand and apply numerical information. This understanding requires the skills of computation, reading of tables and graphs, statistical evaluation of data, and presentation of quantitative arguments.
- **Information Literacy** is a set of abilities enabling students to recognize when information is needed, and to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information. "Information," in this context, includes a variety of sources—print, non-print, and electronic.
- **Global Learning/Civic Engagement**  
Global Learning/Civic Engagement includes knowledge about human diversity and the multiethnic, multicultural nature of humankind; awareness of the commonalities of needs and desires of people in a shrinking world; respect for the rights of others; tolerance for difference opinions and views held and expressed by other “world citizens;” and a sense of responsibility to act in ways that enrich the human experience.
- **Artistic Understanding and Artistic Practice**  
Artistic Understanding: The ability to understand and interpret the meanings of works in a particular artistic discipline based on sufficient knowledge of its history and techniques.  
Artistic Practice: The ability to learn the skills and technical vocabulary sufficient to work with focused attention in a particular artistic discipline.

### **Program Specific Learning Outcomes**

Based on the College’s mission and in addition to the general education learning goals defined above, student engagement and learning within specific programs and courses should result in outcomes that demonstrate successful student learning evidencing appropriate and specific and understanding consistent with each major. These outcomes will result from the completed

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

coursework required by the major's curriculum and by activities related to the learning experience—production, research, participation in student organizations, co-curricular activities, etc.

### **Assessment Tools**

General Education Learning Goals are currently being assessed through the coordinated efforts of the Office of Research and Assessment and the University Assessment Committee. The tools being utilized to assess are defined by those entities. The results inform the General Education Committee's deliberations on General Education course requirements.

Assessment efforts being undertaken by individual departments within the College will use various assessment tools to measure program defined outcomes. Assessment tools will provide data comparisons over time and will be informed by evolving theory and practice. Tools are intended to provide data that can be measured, described and analyzed on a cohort basis at the College-wide or department level. Assessment activities that have been used and are being refined to determine student learning include the following (please note that this is not an exhaustive or prescriptive list of assessment tools and not all of the tools are being or will be used by every program):

- Successful completion of a capstone course where the capstone is required of all students in the major and is designed to incorporate the stated learning goals and is assessed by a method that is applied across all sections of the course.
- Pre and Post examinations.
- Student portfolio reviews.
- Annual student juries (performing and visual arts).
- Internship host supervisor evaluations of student interns.
- Documented alumni accomplishments.
- Externally juried student competitions.
- Entry, mid-point and completion of program examinations of required skills and basic content knowledge providing comparison points of results at the three levels.
- Department-wide or multi-section course exams and/or assignments based on stated learning objectives in program assessment plans or multi-section course syllabi.
- Documented student employment success upon graduation.
- Student academic achievement--grade distribution comparisons in key courses or course areas at beginning, intermediate and advanced levels.

- Success in transition to graduate programs and employment rates.

Individual departments may use these or other tools that provide the most appropriate measures (direct and indirect) of their defined learning goals and expected outcomes.

### **Goals of the Comprehensive Assessment Plan**

Faculty will review and analyze the results of assessment on a departmental and College-wide basis as gathered through the various means/tools above (and others) in order to accomplish the following:

- Clearly demonstrate that the mission and educational goals of the College and department are being achieved;
- Provide evidence that a variety of direct and indirect measures have been used to assess student learning at various points and under various circumstances during progress to the degree as well as after graduation;
- Provide evidence of the results of the learning experience in terms of stated learning goals and expected outcomes;
- Utilize the results in curriculum development, pedagogy and overall improvement of the learning experience;
- Provide an articulate, continuous, and reliable source of information to be used in the ongoing deliberations of faculty and academic administration as they seek to maintain and improve student learning and to fulfill the College and department missions;
- Represent the standards of academic and professional excellence to which the College and its faculty members and students aspire.

### **Assessment of the Assessment Plan**

As the College and departments review intended learning outcomes for their students, they will also review the current assessment measures, and revise or complement them with additional measures that might be helpful or more appropriate to the evolving learning experience. The College will do the following to assess its assessment plan:

- Conduct an annual College-wide assessment forum to review College and department learning goals and expected student learning outcomes in terms of what the students must demonstrate in knowledge, skill and values as derived from the mission of the College and its degree programs. In particular, the forum will reinforce faculty review and analysis of the assessment results of measures connected to recently graduated students and alumni. Departments will present examples of their assessments on an occasional and rotational basis.

- Individual departments will periodically review their program assessment plans and the status of measures and evidence gathered in order to insure that learning objectives are incorporated in the appropriate courses and related learning experiences. The department may choose to review all or part of its assessment plan on annual periodic basis depending on the learning or program goals. The department should define a regular yet manageable program of review that it conducts, documents, reflects upon and acts upon accordingly. The results of these deliberations will be collected by the Dean's office and stored in the Compliance Assist software system that the University is using as a mechanism to report to the Middle States Commission.
- The office of the Dean will provide all faculty members with the University suggested template and related instructions for the creation of course syllabi prior to each semester. The instructions will remind faculty members to include concrete, measureable learning objectives/outcomes as a stated component of their course syllabus. In addition, the Dean's office will provide reference resources to full and part-time faculty related to assessment and the development of measurable learning goals.
- Copies of all syllabi will be maintained by the Dean's office and the University Library.
- The Dean will ask that faculty form a representative executive assessment committee for the College that will advise on the various assessment measures and activities defined in this plan and its related program plans.
- Assessment information and summary reports will be shared as required and appropriate.
- Every five years, the Dean will ask the faculty to form an Assessment Plan Evaluation Task Force, consisting of representative members of the faculty, which will review the College's written assessment plan and provide recommendations to the College for its information and action.

The individual departmental and program assessment plans are considered extensions of this overview plan and will guide the individual program assessment efforts.

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