**Liberal Education Committee, Chair’s Annual Report**

**2020-2021**

The Liberal Education committee met (8) times in the 2020-21 academic year (meeting dates were 9/18/20, 10/9/20,11/12/20, 12/14/20, 2/19/21, 3/19/21, 4/23/21, 5/14/21).

The 2020-21 Domain Representatives were:

* *Basic Communication Proficiency*: Anahi Douglas, English
* *Mathematics Proficiency*: Doyoung Park, Mathematics
* *Domain 2, Creativity & Arts*: Patricia Harris, Visual Arts
* *Domain 3, Western Tradition:* Chelsea Shields- Más, History
* *Domain 4, American Experience*: Jasmine Mitchell, American Studies
* *Domain 5, Major Cultures*: Edislav Manetovic , PEL
* *Domain 6, Foreign Language*: Fernando Guerrero, Modern Languages
* *Domain 7, Natural Science*: Zulema Cabail, Biology
* *Humanities (H)*: Danielle Lee, English
* *Social Sciences (SS)*: Erin Toolis, Psychology
* *Diversity (D)*: Sarah Smith, Public Health

Additional members included  Ashlee Lien (Academic Assessment), Rachel Littenberg (Transfer Student Services), and Yumi Nicholson (Academic Advising).

The 2020-21 LEC accomplished the following:

* Six new course approvals
* Moved forward with implementation of LEAP+
* Identified ways to improve assessment process in LEC to create a meaningful process
* Discussed implications of learning outcome assessment in three domains (American Experience, Humanities, Western Tradition) and identified needs based on instructor feedback during assessment process

These accomplishments are discussed in detail in the narrative portion, below.

**Course Approvals**

Over the course of the year, the LEC reviewed, approved six new courses for inclusion in OW’s Liberal Education Program and submitted six courses for approval via the SUNY dashboard:

* *BS2490: Environmental Science (*Domain 7)
* *HI3001: Introduction to Environmental Studies* (Domain SS and H)
* *HI3120: Latin America: Environment and Society* (Domain 5)
* *SY2800 Race, Class, Gender, Sexuality* (D)
* *PH2900: Black Lives Matter: Health Inequities in the U.S.*  (Domain 4)
* *\*PH4700 Medical Anthropology* (Domains SS and 5)

(\* PH4700 was submitted as a 4000-level course to be included within LEC domains)

**LEAP+ Transition**

On April 22, 2016, the Faculty Senate approved a resolution to adopt the AACUs LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes (strengthened by the Old Westbury Mission) as a model for institutional outcomes and liberal education. A task force had been proposed to implement these changes, however work had not begun until 2019 with an initial mapping process. The continuation of the process occurred during AY 20-21 by moving the process into the LEC for continued work on the alignment with existing learning outcomes. The LEC reviewed the history of the LEAP+ integration, the role of Academic Assessment in informing the Liberal Education Program, and alignment with Middle States. To continue progress with the LEAP+ transition, each domain representative compared current SUNY and local SLOs to the objectives defined by the LEAP Value Rubrics. After making comparisons, each representative recorded the data on a shared spreadsheet to assess areas where SLOs did not align with LEAP outcomes.

All domains, with the exception of the Western Tradition and American Experience  domains, completed the mapping process by April 2021 (see Appendix A). At that point the LEC learned of a soon-to-be announced proposal documenting changes to the SUNY General Education requirements. The remainder of the process was placed on hold as the alignment will need to fit the new SUNY general education learning outcomes, yet to be determined.

**Assessment of Assessment**

The LEC is committed to engaging in academic assessment, an essential component of the College’s self-evaluation for Middle States Accreditation. While the original plan for AY 20-21 was to conduct a learning outcome assessment of the Diversity domain, the leadership transition in academic assessment provided an opportunity to utilize the year as a “re-set” for assessment practices. During the year, the Co-Director of Academic Assessment (Co-DAA), Ashlee Lien, held multiple conversations with individual domain representatives who had recently engaged in a learning assessment cycle and with the entire LEC. Conversations included information about roles in academic assessment, understandings of assessment practice, how assessment has been used in curricular decisions, and a consideration of what would be desired as an outcome of the assessment process in the future. Conversations revealed the following:

* There is a lack of clarity regarding the difference between the two forms of assessment conducted in the LEC: syllabus review and learning outcome assessment. This lack of clarity applied to the process of conducting each assessment, how they differed (or that they were different from one another), and the purpose of each form of assessment.
* Domain representatives consistently reported a lack of awareness of the importance of assessment in the LEC upon joining, and often as members of the committee who had not yet engaged in the assessment process.
* How the assessment is (and should be) used for maintaining the quality of the liberal education program and improving the curriculum was unclear. Closing the loop activities often focused on the assessment process rather than the curriculum.

Based on consideration of all information obtained during the “assessment of assessment” process combined with conversations during the Middle States Accreditation process (self-study and site visit), a new 5-year assessment cycle was developed for presentation in the LEC for AY 21-22. The new cycle (see Appendix B) is a 5-phase process where each domain engages in part of the assessment cycle each year.

**Closing the Loop**

Guided by the Co-Director of Academic Assessment and current LEC member Ashlee Lien, the LEC engaged in conversations about how to utilize assessment results. Implications of the 2019-2020 learning outcome assessments (American Experience, Humanities, Western Tradition) were considered and resulted in identification of instructor concerns about low quality of student writing. This presented several barriers:  inability to teach advanced topics because of the attention required for writing instruction; a lack of preparation to teach writing skills; and an inability to assess mastery of student learning in written assignments due to poor writing ability. As a result, the LEC engaged in a discussion of creating rubrics (in consultation with the English Department) to assess student writing in various levels of courses. Conversation will continue in the next AY with concrete actions to be taken.

**Plans for AY 21-22**

* LEAP+ integration
  + The LEC will continue work on LEAP+ integration, basing final proposed alignment on new SUNY General Education requirements.
* Revision to assessment process
  + The Co-Director or Academic Assessment, Ashlee Lien, will present the new 5-phase model of assessment and 5-year cycle to LEC for endorsement.
  + A manual will be developed by the LEC Chair and Co-Director of Academic Assessment, Ashlee Lien, to clarify the charge of the LEC, provide learning outcomes, and create instructions for each phase of the assessment model.
  + Domain representatives will begin the process of creating detailed rubrics for domains to be assessed in AY 21-22.
* Closing the loop
  + The LEC will engage in “closing the loop” conversations based on most recent learning outcome assessments.
  + Identify actions to address writing quality in the liberal education program
* Upcoming SUNY General Education changes will be considered by the LEC Chair and Co-DAA, in consultation with relevant stakeholders (Chairs, domain representatives) to assess alignment with current LEP, impact on LEP, and considerations during campus-wide implementation of changes.
* LEC will continue to work on streamlining LEC processes and materials

**Appendix A**

LEAP Mapping document

Calendar

Description automatically generated

**Appendix B**

**Table: LEC Assessment Schedule (2021-2026)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Phase 1 (Fall)** | **Phase 2 (Spring)** | **Phase 3** | **Phase 4** | **Phase 5** |
|  | **Syllabus Review** | **LO Assessment** | **Domain revisions/**  **Curricular support** | **Mini (Re)Assessment** | **Revisions** |
| **21-22** | Critical Thinking | Foreign Language | Humanities |  |  |
|  | Math | Social Sciences | Western Tradition |  |  |
|  |  | Creativity & the Arts | American Experience |  |  |
| **22-23** | Diversity | Critical Thinking | Foreign Language | Humanities |  |
|  | Major Cultures | Math | Social Sciences | Western Tradition |  |
|  | Natural Sciences |  | Creativity & the Arts | American Experience |  |
| **23-24** | Basic Communication | Diversity | Critical Thinking | Foreign Language | Humanities |
|  | Information Management | Major Cultures | Math | Social Sciences | Western Tradition |
|  | Applied Learning | Natural Sciences |  | Creativity & the Arts | American Experience |
| **24-25** | Humanities | Basic Communication | Diversity | Critical Thinking | Foreign Language |
|  | Western Tradition | Information Management | Major Cultures | Math | Social Sciences |
|  | American Experience | Applied Learning | Natural Sciences |  | Creativity & the Arts |
| **25-26** | Foreign Language | Humanities | Basic Communication | Diversity | Critical Thinking |
|  | Social Sciences | Western Tradition | Information Management | Major Cultures | Math |
|  | Creativity & the Arts | American Experience | Applied Learning | Natural Sciences |  |

**5-Phase LEP Assessment Cycle**

This 5-phase cycle will occur over a 5-year period, progressing to the next phase of the cycle at the beginning of the next academic year. A description of the goals and processes involved in each phase are detailed below.

**Phase 1: Syllabus Review**

* Timing: The syllabus review will typically occur in the fall to balance assessment activities carried out in the Liberal Education Committee (LEC). This review may be postponed until the spring for domains that may have more representative courses offered in the spring, or for domain representatives who are unable to coordinate assessment efforts during the fall semester.
* Collect syllabi for all courses being taught in the domain during the assessment period.
* Syllabi will be evaluated for presence of domain-specific learning outcomes and linkages of learning outcomes to listed discussion topics, readings, and assignments.
* Reports will be prepared by domain representatives for presentation at LEC. Upon presentation, reports will be distributed to instructors and Departments contributing to the domain.
* Reports will be compiled in repository (Weave or other relevant software).

**Phase 2: Learning Outcome (LO) Assessment**

* Co-DAA will work with domain representative to establish sampling plan for the LO assessment. Domain representative will conduct initial outreach to faculty in the semester prior to LO assessment.
* Co-DAA and domain representative will guide faculty included in the sample with assignment selection and utilizing LEP rubrics to assess student artifacts. Data collection will be completed upon the end of the semester.
* Reports will be prepared by Co-DAA in consultation with domain representatives.
* Presentation of reports will be conducted in LEC in the semester following assessment and distributed to instructors and Departments contributing to the domain.
* Reports will be compiled in repository (Weave or other relevant software).

**Phase 3: Domain Revisions/ Curricular Support**

* During this phase, assessments conducted in phases 1 and 2 will be revisited and reviewed in detail. LEC will complete a discussion of challenges/ weaknesses and successes/ strengths, with the goal of making adjustments to improve the domain.
* Discussions held in LEC will focus on action items to address the challenges or reinforce the strengths identified through assessment phases 1 and 2.
* Action items may emphasize student learning or faculty instruction of the learning outcomes. Revisions for this phase should not focus on the assessment process.
* Recommendations should be enacted and may include direct support to departments and/or faculty teaching in the domain, refinement of documents to guide course design and instruction, and recommendations for inclusion/ exclusion of courses in the domain.
* If a course is found not to address domain-specific learning outcomes, direct support should be provided to the department offering the course and it must be included in the phase 4 (re)assessment process.
* LEC is encouraged to design workshops for faculty specifically focusing on LEP recommendations identified during this phase.
* Summary reports will be created by domain representative and distributed to the LEC.
* Reports will be compiled in repository (Weave or other relevant software).

**Phase 4: Mini (Re)Assessment**

* A subsection of courses included in the phases 1 and 2 will be reassessed to monitor improvements and revisions.
* Co-DAA will work with the domain representative to identify a sample of courses to be included. Domain representatives will initiate contact with faculty to be included in the sample.
* Any courses identified as not addressing domain-specific learning outcomes in phase 3 must be included in the phase 4 (re)assessment process.
* Co-DAA and domain representative will guide faculty included in the sample with assignment selection and utilizing LEP rubrics to assess student artifacts. Data collection will be completed upon the end of the semester. Domain representative will serve as second rater for a random selection of assignments.
* Reports will be prepared by Co-DAA in consultation with domain representatives.
* Presentation of reports will be conducted in LEC upon conclusion of reassessment and distributed to instructors and Departments contributing to the domain.
* Reports will be compiled in repository (Weave or other relevant software).

**Phase 5: Revisions**

* Based on phase 4 reassessment, determine what further revisions need to be made to strengthen the domain.
* LEC may consider hosting workshops for faculty focusing on ongoing recommendations made during this phase. Other support may be provided to faculty teaching in the domain through discussions and verbal or written guidance.
* During this phase, courses that did not address domain-specific learning outcomes in phase 3 should be discussed. If the courses still do not address the domain learning outcomes, LEC should create a recommendation for inclusion/exclusion from the domain and any associated action steps for the contributing Department.
* Summary reports will be created by domain representative and distributed to the LEC.
* Reports will be compiled in repository (Weave or other relevant software).