DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED WITH LIBERAL EDUCATION REFORM

Question 1. **Please define the terms used in the proposed liberal education core and specify their connections:**

**Answer 1:** *Learning Experience.* For practical purposes, think of a learning experience as a course or a course equivalent. A learning experience is a credit-bearing activity comprised of specific combinations of learning resources, tools, and activities guided by pedagogical models through which one can identify, to a certain extent, what one has learned. While the majority of learning experiences are courses, other learning experiences occur outside the typical classroom, foster growth and development of the students, have a deliverable academic outcome, and are overseen by a faculty member of the institution supervising the student’s work. Examples include credit-bearing instances of First-Year Seminars and Experiences, Living-Learning Communities, Faculty/Student Collaborative Research, Study and Research Abroad, and Service-Learning. A learning experience must meet at least one of the UWEC Liberal Education Learning Outcomes in order to be approved by the University Liberal Education Committee as contributing to the Liberal Education Core. The University Liberal Education Committee will determine the number of outcomes each learning experience can fulfill. The supervisory faculty is responsible for collecting appropriate student work for each outcomes assessed.

**Answer 2:** *Assignment.* An assignment is a task assigned to students to provide them with an opportunity to demonstrate their learning.

**Answer 3:** *Student work.* Whatever the student submits in response to an assignment.

**Answer 4:** *Outcome rubric.* A rubric is a scoring tool that explicitly represents the performance expectations for an assignment or piece of work. A rubric divides the assigned work into component parts and provides clear descriptions of the characteristics of the work associated with each component, at varying levels of mastery. Rubrics can be used for a wide array of assignments: papers, projects, oral presentations, artistic performances, group projects, etc. Rubrics can be used as scoring or grading guides, to provide formative feedback to support and guide ongoing learning efforts, or both. ([http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/rubrics.html](http://www.cmu.edu/teaching/design/teach/rubrics.html))

**Answer 5:** *Liberal education learning outcome.* An outcome is the specific knowledge, skill or behavior that we expect our students to demonstrate after participating in one or more learning activities. Outcomes demonstrate what our university values. We have 11 liberal education learning outcomes representing our university values related to knowledge, skills, responsibility and integration.

**Answer 6:** *How do they all connect?* A learning experience includes one or more assignments. An assignment may be associated with a specific liberal education learning outcome. Students complete the assignment and submit their work. A faculty member uses an outcome rubric to score the submitted work to assess how well the students demonstrated the particular knowledge, skill or behavior described in the outcome rubric.

Question 2. **What is the difference between the proposed “liberal education core” and the existing “general education”?**

**Answer 1:** General Education is comprised of 5 categories and 21 subcategories of coursework. The liberal education core is based on 11 liberal education outcomes.
Benefit i. Increased flexibility for students to tailor their liberal education core to their academic goals.

Benefit ii. Less complexity for students and advisors when planning a student’s academic career.

Answer 2: The focus of the liberal education core is on outcomes rather than seats in a course.

Benefit i. Students understand why they are taking a course (or another type of learning experience) and why it is important for their overall learning (what they should be able to know or do before graduating from UWEC).

Benefit ii. Outcomes represent University of Wisconsin—Eau Claire values. Students’ proficiency towards attaining those outcomes can—and will be—measured.

Benefit iii. An outcomes-based liberal education informs students, parents, the community and our legislature what our students will learn from earning a baccalaureate degree here.

Benefit iv. Improved retention rate is a side effect of the higher quality education students receive with an outcomes-based approach.

Question 3. What was the process behind reforming liberal education over the past 2 years?

Answer 1: Transfer from ULEC to APC. In November 2011, the University Liberal Education Committee (ULEC) forwarded a proposal for liberal education reform to the Academic Policies Committee (APC).

Answer 2: Transparent processes leading to informed decisions. During Fall 2011 and Spring 2012 ULEC and APC jointly presented the proposal to all four colleges and invited input via a Qualtrics survey on the Liberal Education Reform website. Each week (continuing to the present) the chair of APC downloads the survey input and distributes its contents to APC members for discussion prior to the straw-poll votes. Experts and relevant stakeholders for each proposal item were formally invited to APC meetings to inform the APC discussion prior to each straw-poll vote. APC considered each of the items on the ULEC proposal, making straw-poll votes to indicate value. The explicitly stated intent was to make decisions on each component individually and then return to the entire proposal for overall evaluation and vote. Each week an edited version of the ULEC proposal was posted on the Liberal Education Reform website, identifying APC action on the proposal.

Answer 3: New Liberal Education Learning Goals and Outcomes leading to a new proposal. During late summer and the first part of the Fall 2012 semester, chairs and directors from across campus developed a proposal for new liberal education learning goals and outcomes. The University Senate held charrettes to solicit input on the proposed goals and outcomes. The University Senate adopted new liberal education learning goals and outcomes. In December 2012 the University Senate adopted new liberal education learning goals and outcomes. Based on the new goals and outcomes, the Academic Policies Committee had to quickly create a new proposal for liberal education reform that captured the straw-poll vote values from the ULEC proposal while aligning with the new liberal education learning outcomes. Both the new proposal and a document specifying weekly changes are published on the Liberal Education Reform website.

Question 4. Instead of the term “learning experience,” could we just say “course,” since most of the “learning experiences” are courses?

Answer 1: It is true that the majority of learning experiences are courses. However, in the shift of perspective from “completing courses” to “demonstrating proficiency in learning outcomes,” the Academic Policies Committee wanted to provide students with other, approved opportunities for demonstrating their learning. Faculty/Student Collaborative Research is an excellent example. In many cases, students do not earn course credit for this highly rigorous activity. Yet, their activities are monitored by a faculty member; their learning is guided by one or more pedagogical models; and they create something that demonstrates their learning.
Benefit i. Students can participate in scholarly/creative extra-curricular activities while simultaneously making progress toward their baccalaureate degree. One UWEC goal is to increase these types of scholarly/creative extra-curricular activities.

Question 5. How many students are currently participating in “non-course activities” that could qualify as “learning experiences”?

Answer 1: Approximately 270-370 students (out of our estimated 10,500 students) currently participate in some type of Domestic Intercultural Immersion (DII) experience, a Living Learning Community (LLC), or Faculty/Student Collaborative Research. Most of the DII experiences do not have a course component, but all provide some type of preparatory meetings. The LLCs show great potential for growth, since they include programming in the residence halls that is not attached to any credit-bearing activity. The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs has data indicating an overall increase in number of freshmen and sophomores participating in Faculty/Student Collaborative Research from 15 students in 2000 to 76 students in 2010. Other high-impact practices exist across campus. The number of non-course learning experiences could increase as faculty running non-credit-bearing high-impact-practice activities consider ways their high-impact practices could contribute to the liberal education core.

Question 6. How are learning experiences approved? What is the process?

Answer 1: To be included in the liberal education core, a learning experience must be approved by the University Liberal Education Committee (ULEC). ULEC is currently defining its process for approving learning experiences for the liberal education core. However, the basic elements for approval include the following: identified learning outcome(s); demonstrated opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate achievement of learning outcome(s); description of assignments that will be used to measure level of attainment of specified outcomes; copy of course syllabus or equivalent; faculty agreement to collect assessment data for learning outcome(s).

Benefit i. ULEC will monitor the rigor of learning experiences associated with liberal education learning outcomes.

Question 7. How does the assessment of learning outcomes work with learning experiences designed to meet a particular outcome?

Answer 1: Within your course, you have specific assignments. For each assignment, students will submit their work, which is subject to grading. The same concept holds true for learning experiences associated with learning outcomes. Students participating in a learning experience will perform a variety of learning activities. One or more of these learning activities will be focused on a particular liberal education learning outcome. Upon completion of the learning activities, students will submit their work, which the faculty will score using an approved rubric.

Question 8. How many liberal education outcomes can be met from one learning experience?

Answer 1: Each learning experience must meet at least one liberal education learning outcome in order to be included in the liberal education core. The University Liberal Education Committee is responsible for setting an upper limit, if any, on number of learning outcomes met through one learning experience. In the course/outcome mapping activity, many existing courses were identified as potentially meeting two or more learning outcomes. That is, faculty indicated that a current course could include multiple assignments, each aligned with a different learning outcome. The challenge for faculty will be in developing assignments that meet the various criteria on a corresponding outcome rubric.

Benefit i. Students can use one learning experience to meet multiple liberal education learning outcomes, thereby reducing the total number of credits associated with the liberal education core.
Benefit ii. Because a learning experience can meet multiple learning outcomes, faculty can design learning experiences to purposefully integrate content, thereby facilitating holistic student learning.

Question 9. How many credits are associated with the liberal education core?

Answer 1: Phase 1 implementation: In the event that a student takes all courses (no non-course learning experiences) and takes different courses to meet each learning outcome, then the liberal education core would require 49 credits, including 6 university requirements.

Answer 2: Phase 2 implementation: In the event that a student takes all courses (no non-course learning experiences) and takes different courses to meet each learning outcome, then the liberal education core would require 61 credits, including 6 university requirements.

Answer 3: The intent of the APC proposal for liberal education reform is for one learning experience to meet multiple learning outcomes. The more learning experiences that faculty create to meet multiple learning outcomes, the more flexibility students will have in tailoring their academic plan to provide depth in different areas. Given existing courses and how well aligned faculty thought they were with learning outcomes, students could easily meet the 11 learning outcomes within 40 credits.

Question 10. What are AAC&U VALUE rubrics and why are they associated with the liberal education learning outcomes?

Answer 1: From the AAC&U Website: You can download the AAC&U rubrics from http://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics/index_p.cfm?CFID=50068930&CFTOKEN=62679314. Additionally, a copy of these rubrics will be linked to the University Senate site. The VALUE rubrics were developed by teams of faculty experts representing colleges and universities across the United States through a process that examined many existing campus rubrics and related documents for each learning outcome and incorporated additional feedback from faculty. The rubrics articulate fundamental criteria for each learning outcome, with performance descriptors demonstrating progressively more sophisticated levels of attainment. The rubrics are intended for institutional-level use in evaluating and discussing student learning, not for grading. The core expectations articulated in all 15 of the VALUE rubrics can and should be translated into the language of individual campuses, disciplines, and even courses. The utility of the VALUE rubrics is to position learning at all undergraduate levels within a basic framework of expectations such that evidence of learning can by shared nationally through a common dialog and understanding of student success.

Answer 2: UWEC: UWEC faculty have already made good progress in revising some of the AAC&U rubrics to match our liberal education learning goals and outcomes. We currently have and are using the following rubrics: integrative learning, critical multicultural learning, and global learning. These three rubrics are linked to the University Senate website. The University Liberal Education Committee will be working with faculty teaching in the Liberal Education Core, as well as with the University Assessment Committee, to develop the remaining rubrics aligned with each learning outcome. As soon as these rubrics are developed, they will be 1) posted on a university Liberal Education Core site, 2) posted on the university assessment site and 3) directly linked from the e-forms for new course proposals/course revisions.

Question 11. What rubric would I use to determine how to revise an assignment in my learning experience so that I can collect data associated with a particular learning outcome?

Answer 1: You can use the AAC&U VALUE rubrics until the University Liberal Education Committee finalizes a process for adjusting and approving the AAC&U rubrics for use at UWEC. The AAC&U rubrics will give you a good sense of what the submitted student work should achieve. Per the Director of Assessment, the following rubrics appear to be the most closely
aligned with each of the following liberal education learning outcomes:
-- Knowledge 1: Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubric; Problem Solving VALUE Rubric
-- Knowledge 2: Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubric; Problem Solving VALUE Rubric
-- Knowledge 3: Inquiry and Analysis VALUE Rubric; Problem Solving VALUE Rubric; Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric
-- Skills 1: Written Communication VALUE Rubric; Oral Communication VALUE Rubric
-- Skills 2: Quantitative Literacy VALUE Rubric
-- Skills 3: Creative Thinking VALUE Rubric
-- Responsibility 1: UWEC Multicultural Learning Rubric; Intercultural Knowledge and Competence VALUE Rubric; Ethical Reasoning VALUE Rubric
-- Responsibility 2: UWEC Global Learning Rubric
-- Responsibility 3: Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric; Critical Thinking VALUE Rubric, Creative Thinking VALUE Rubric
-- Integration 1: UWEC Integrative Learning Rubric

Answer 2: Keep in mind that students would likely reach a maximum of a Milestone 2 on the rubric at the level of the liberal education core (primarily freshman and sophomore). Upon completion of their baccalaureate degree, students will (hopefully) have attained the capstone level of proficiency on those liberal education learning outcomes most closely associated with their major.

Question 12. How can I know whether assignments I’ve designed will elicit student performance that adequately demonstrates mastery of a liberal education learning outcome?

Answer 1: In the same way that you design an assignment to evaluate student proficiency towards an instructional objective, student work associated with a liberal education learning outcome must be substantive enough to allow for measurement of the outcome using an outcome rubric. The University Liberal Education Committee will consider your descriptions of assignments (demonstrating how students will meet learning outcomes) as part of the approval process for including your proposed learning experience in the liberal education core.

Question 13. Can I use outcome rubrics for grading purposes or are they only used for assessment?

Answer 1: That’s up to you as a faculty member. Although the rubrics were not designed to be used for grading, faculty can assign grades based on corresponding levels of proficiency indicated on the outcome rubric. Alternatively, faculty could use the outcome rubric to score the liberal education learning outcome component of the assignment and then assign an overall grade to the entire assignment—based on other grading criteria.

Question 14. Is there funding available to help me create/revise course assignments to align with learning outcomes?

Answer 1: There is some Title III funding available to support faculty development efforts towards enhancing integrative learning, multicultural learning, and global learning infusion into liberal education courses. Other than the Title III funding, there is no external financial support.

Question 15. How will resources be allocated to support the new liberal education? How will the proposed liberal education reform impact my department?

Answer 1: Resources for liberal education will be determined at the level of the Provost.

Question 16. Why were the Physical Activity and Wellness requirements eliminated?

Answer 1: Although these two requirements are important for our students, other non-curricular opportunities are available to meet these needs. The Office of Student Affairs has several
initiatives in place for wellness. Freshman Orientation is an excellent opportunity for students to learn about some of the wellness concepts.

Question 17. What happened to Foreign Language/Foreign Culture requirement?
Answer 1: The Foreign Language/Foreign Culture requirement is embedded within two of the liberal education learning outcomes: Responsibility 2: Evaluate the impact of systems, institutions and issues in local and global contexts and across cultures; Responsibility 3: Use critical and creative thinking to address civic, social, and environmental challenges. The results of the mapping activity, whereby faculty mapped their current courses to the newly approved liberal education learning outcomes, indicated that courses currently used to satisfy the Foreign Language/Foreign Culture requirement aligned with those two learning outcomes.

Question 18. Why did APC retain the laboratory science requirement?
Answer 1: Laboratory experience helps students understand how science is conducted and allows them to both appreciate the value of scientific evidence as the result of a systematic process of controlled inquiry and understand the limitation of scientific knowledge as only giving information about what is quantifiable. The high-impact pedagogical practices of active learning and immersion associated with laboratory science have been shown to be especially effective for students from underserved populations.

Answer 2: The research methodologies associated with natural and physical sciences is different from those associated with the social sciences. Students need both. The Knowledge 1 learning outcome, with which the laboratory science requirement is associated, is open to any of the research methodologies—both social sciences and natural and physical sciences—which address that outcome.

Question 19. Why did APC retain the Service-Learning requirement?
Answer 1: High-quality Service-Learning meets the learning outcome our university adopted.

Answer 2: Continued funding for the Blugold Differential Tuition dollars is dependent, in part, on having every student on our campus complete at least one high-impact practice. Service-Learning is a proven high-impact practice with multiple benefits—especially for students representing underserved populations.

Question 20. How will the quality of service-learning be improved on our campus?
Answer 1: The interim Administrator of the Center for Service-Learning is working with the Service-Learning Advisory Committee and the staff of the Center for Service-Learning to refine the focus of service-learning projects to make them more meaningful to students—possibly offering some type of internship credentials. Over 75% of the community partners who attended the Community Action Fair were interested in this option. This type of change in direction will increase the rigor and quality of service-learning projects.

Answer 2: With respect to inclusion in the liberal education core, projects completed in conjunction with service-learning hours would have to produce student work that a faculty mentor could score with a corresponding learning outcome rubric.

Question 21. What happened to the ethics requirement from the University Liberal Education Committee proposal for liberal education reform?
Answer 1: Ethics is embedded within each of the liberal education learning outcomes, but especially within the Responsibility outcomes.
Question 22. What happened to the immersion requirement from the University Liberal Education Committee proposal for liberal education reform?

Answer 1: The Academic Policies Committee was not able to support the inclusion of an immersion requirement in the new liberal education proposal because of a) the additional expense imposed upon students, and b) lack of university infrastructure to support a required immersion experience.

Question 23. Why are the arts and humanities combined? Doesn’t just two learning experiences underrepresent these important areas, especially the humanities?

Answer 1: The combination of Arts and Humanities provides an opportunity for a student to explore content from each area or increase their depth of knowledge in one area without placing an onerous burden on either area.

Answer 2: Rather than being underrepresented, the Humanities are likely to have more representation in the liberal education core than do the Arts. The Arts have limited resource capacity to contribute to the liberal education core. Mandating more from the Arts could force them to sacrifice other instructional content. Much as it is now with courses, students who do not have the opportunity to participate in a learning experience in one area (e.g., the Arts) will look for opportunities in other areas (e.g., the Humanities) to satisfy a corresponding learning outcome.

Question 24. Is there a prefix limitation or a limitation on classes counting for both a major and for liberal education?

Answer 1: No. The Academic Policies Committee voted to remove the two-prefix limitation included in the original University Liberal Education Committee proposal. This decision was based on input from current University Liberal Education Committee members and the Registrar’s Office: a) the outcomes-based liberal education model enables the University Liberal Education Committee to ensure breadth; prefixes are arbitrary—some departments have multiple prefixes.