Overview and Results: Retreat on General Education at UC Merced, June 10-11, 2015

Retreat Process, Overview

Retreat Goals
The 2015 GE retreat continues to establish a curricular foundation for future planning. Anticipated retreat outcomes include:
Outcome 1: Develop a set of guiding principles that explicitly articulate the role of GE at UC Merced. These principles would be in light of the hallmarks and build on the discussion about the role of GE in the retreat synthesis.
Outcome 2: Craft a set of learning outcomes that reflect the GE principles and most importantly capture GE-relevant aspects of the hallmarks.

Participants
GE Subcommittee members facilitated sessions with

- Senate faculty from all Schools, representing a variety of undergraduate majors and minor programs
- Unit 18 lecturers, with a range of instructional and disciplinary backgrounds
- School academic advisors, with Student Affairs staff from housing and community engagement
- Academic Affairs staff representation, with the Center for Research on Teaching Excellence and Core 1
- Faculty administrators, with University Librarian and Vice Provost for Faculty

Process
Team-based and plenary discussions focused on addressing the following questions:

1. Given the hallmarks of undergraduate education at UC Merced, what is the mission for our General Education program?
2. Given the emerging emphases in our GE mission statements, what are the related and intended GE learning outcomes?
3. Given the GE learning outcome descriptions in this category, what are the overlapping concepts?

Retreat Results: Summary

The following GE Retreat Synthesis (2015) seeks to summarize team projects and session notes into brief, aligned narratives. We have translated the hallmarks of an undergraduate education to provide a broad framework for "What does it mean to graduate from UC Merced?" followed by a GE mission statement and educational philosophy. GE outcomes are pattern-based and represented as a results table. Visuals (and figurative language) were considered by teams as important, with preliminary drafts in the appendix for further consideration and potential development.

The GE Retreat Synthesis (2015), then, includes the following summaries:

- What does it mean to graduate from UC Merced? (UCM undergraduate hallmarks)
- GE mission statement and educational philosophy
- GE learning outcome descriptions, results chart

What does it mean to graduate from UC Merced?

Founded as the first American research university in this century, UC Merced provides a unique setting for undergraduate education. Our students carry forward knowledge, skills, and attitudes that reflect the distinctive experience of

- *A small, public research university* imbued with an ethos of discovery, creativity, and engagement;
- *located in Merced, California*, at geographic, cultural, and environmental crossroads that present opportunities and responsibilities to address problems of local, regional, and global significance.

Our graduates contribute to, and reflect, these hallmarks of an undergraduate degree at UC Merced. As active contributors to learning experiences, our diverse, primarily first-generation, undergraduate population shape and inform our research, teaching and service mission.

As learners who have participated in the culture of a research university, UC Merced graduates approach the world by being curious and asking research questions. We engage in diverse ideas, cultures and research approaches, wherein transformative educational experiences are fostered.

Specifically, UC Merced graduates take an inquiry-oriented approach to the world by

- thinking critically and creatively about experiences and information
- building various forms of knowledge and developing abilities while being aware of how they know what they know
- asking and answering research questions informed by multidisciplinary knowledge and abilities

As learners who have joined and contributed to the culture(s) of a research university, UC Merced graduates

Contribute to their communities, including academic ones, through application of knowledge and research to problems, challenges, and opportunities.

Are pioneers and life-long learners able to communicate and share their knowledge and abilities with integrity, initiative, and self-awareness and resilience.

From application to graduation, UC Merced's undergraduates explore and cultivate these hallmarks through all their educational experiences inside and outside the classroom, including their major, General Education, and the co-curriculum.

General Education Program, UC Merced

Mission Statement

UC Merced's general education program ignites curiosity and teaches students how to ask and explore transformative questions. The spirit of inquiry is nurtured, building students' knowledge of various fields, cultures, and perspectives. General education gives students the abilities to collaborate and communicate, empowering students to share their learning and skills to address the local and global challenges of an interconnected, changing world.

Educational Philosophy

UC Merced – a research university focused on an interdisciplinary and comprehensive approach to solve problems in a complex and dynamic world -- provides a distinctive setting for fostering the research skills and scholarly habits of a caring and engaged global citizen. As future leaders, educated in California's diverse Central Valley, UC Merced students gain multiple perspectives and opportunities to develop resiliency to obstacles, to conduct themselves ethically, and to engage in diverse approaches to problem-solving informed by an understanding of the humanities, arts, sciences, and social sciences. At our campus, then, students will be challenged to move beyond the accumulation of perishable facts, in the interest of engaging in the dynamic process of assembling and advancing knowledge, to develop a wide range of skills needed to address societal challenges.

Our GE program develops undergraduates' personal, academic, and professional readiness to respond to future challenges and opportunities. GE experiences will foster individual and collective inquiry to seek information and evaluate evidence from diverse sources and perspectives in ways consistent with sound research practices. GE aims to provide a broad based interdisciplinary approach to problem solving that complements and enhances the more focused endeavors pursued by students in their majors.

Our program, then, equips students with the essential scholarly skills and habits to fully engage transformative questions and knowledge. In this spirit of research inquiry, GE students will explore and integrate knowledge across disciplines, deepen their understanding of themselves and the world around them, and develop a reflective, considered vision of how to contribute to our collective future.

GE Learning Outcome Descriptions

These following statements align with our synthesized **learning outcome descriptions**, which are organized into three categories.

Curiosity about knowledge (PLOs: inquiry, life at a research university)

Other key words and phrases: spark, question, ask, sound research practices, scholarly skills and habits, spirit of research inquiry

Building Knowledge and Abilities (PLOs: intercultural knowledge, integrative learning, ethical understanding, adaptability, quantitative and rhetorical literacies)

Other key words and phrases: accumulate, kindle, develop, nurture, assemble knowledge, problem-solve, seek information and evaluate evidence, explore and integrate knowledge across disciplines, deepen understanding of self and world, grow

Sharing and Communicating Knowledge and Abilities (PLOs: communication, self-awareness, leadership and teamwork, citizenship and civic engagement)

Other key words and phrases: shine, blaze, move beyond perishable facts, advance knowledge, develop reflective and considered vision of how to contribute to our future, address societal challenges, become future leaders, life-long learning

Results table, from GE Retreat (2015)

*items are clustered without prioritization within grouping

Curiosity about knowledge				
Concept[1]	Team A	Team B/C	Team D	Team E
Inquiry *VALUE rubric*: Inquiry and Analysis *WASC Core Competencies*[2]: Information 411	Critical thinking Aesthetic awareness Asking good questions Understanding limitations Knowledge creation Preservation/Transformation Value of research		Identify and respond to challenges and opportunities Evaluate existing knowledge Recognize the elements of an appropriate plan	Create new knowledge Moving beyond perishable fact Analyze, synthesize, evaluate Problem-solving

[1] Concepts are based on shared terminology by all teams. A footnote will specify differing descriptions.

[2] WASC Standard 2, Criterion for Review 2.2, institutions report on graduating students' levels of performance in five core competencies: written and oral communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, and information literacy. Definitions are provided in the appendix.

Critical Thinking				
Life at a research university	• Cultivate a thorough-going curiosity about the world, and the bravery to take intellectual risks • Discern connections w/in and between disciples • Identify local and global challenges • Develop awareness of one's role as a member of several communities • Identify / access / navigate campus and community resources and curricular / co-curricular activities [from Team B/C]			
Building skills and knowledge				
Concept	Team A	Team B/C	Team D	Team E
Intercultural knowledge[3] *VALUE rubric*: Intercultural knowledge and competence		Understand and value global perspectives and cultures, and how the global connects to the local. Understand and value diverse historical perspectives, and how the origins of present-day issues have roots in the near and distant past Demonstrate competency in more than one language (linguistic or scientific) Understand mutual impacts between cultural, political, economical, technological, and	Anticipate and navigate the process of developing connections to people, ideas and disciplines	Respect for differences; empathy with others; valuing and understanding diversity

[3] Various descriptions relate to this category, including: cultural competencies (Team B/C), intercultural competence & knowledge (Team E)

		environmental factors		
Integrative learning[4] *VALUE rubric*: Integrative learning *WASC Core Competencies*: Information 411 Critical Thinking	Leadership Team/work and collaboration Cross disciplinary problem solving Integrating science, humanities and arts Integrating curricular and co-curricular experiences	Analyze texts, discern relevance Analyze data Scholarly habits Initiative for personal development	Integrate diverse concepts	
Ethics	• Recognize the ethical dimensions of decision-making [Team D] • Social justice; honesty, integrity and accountability; ecosystems/sustainability; valuing diversity in all areas [Team A]			
Adapt to change *WASC Core Comp:* Critical Thinking	Responsiveness, creativity, problem solving, critical thinking, intellectual risk – Team E			
Literacies *WASC Core Competency:* Quantitative Reasoning	Textual, technical, information, cultural, health, scientific, aesthetic, historical, quantitative – Team E			
Sharing and Communicating Knowledge				
Concept	Team A	Team B/C	Team D	Team E
Communication *VALUE rubric*: Written communication *WASC Core Competencies*:	Writing and reading Speaking and listening Creating and interpreting Visuals Quantitative Artistic	Are active listeners Are sensitive to audience Are able to communicate persuasively in more than one genre Using oral, written, and visual modalities to	Ability to articulate ideas in various forms to diverse audiences	Interpersonal, verbal or nonverbal, written, small group, public

[4] Referred to by Teams B / C as "research skills and scholarship habits"

Written Comm. Oral Comm.		advance an idea in public, group, and interpersonal settings		
Self Awareness VALUE rubric: Life-long Learning	Self-reflection Self-knowledge Knowing one's biases Knowing one's strengths and limitation Humility	Students are goal-oriented and able to manage their own motivation, behavior and social environment	Appreciate and recognize one's roles and responsibilities in communities beyond UCM	Ethics and responsibility Resilience Humility
Leadership and teamwork[5] VALUE rubric: Civic engagement		Students actively participate in efforts to create positive outcomes for themselves and the world around them, valuing human, cultural, and ecological resources	Students actively participate in efforts to create positive actions for themselves and the world around them, valuing human, cultural and ecological resources	Build collaborative skills Handle disagreements / conflict civilly and productively Understand one's own leadership style
Citizenship / Civic Engagement	• Informed citizenship (engagement, participation, making the world a better place) – Team A • Civic engagement (local, global, active citizenship) – Team E			

[5] Stewardship was a related concept. Civic engagement may also relate.

Appendix A: WASC Core Competencies

WASC Core Competencies: The following definitions are from the glossary as part of WASC's accreditation handbook, under Chapter 4 Educational Quality: Student Learning, Core Competencies, and Standards of Performance at Graduation.

Oral communication

communication by means of spoken language for informational, persuasive, and expressive purposes. In addition to speech, oral communication may employ visual aids, body language, intonation, and other non-verbal elements to support the conveyance of meaning and connection with the audience. Oral communication may include speeches, presentations, discussions, dialogue, and other forms of interpersonal communication, either delivered face to face or mediated technologically.

Quantitative reasoning

the ability to apply mathematical concepts to the interpretation and analysis of quantitative information in order to solve a wide range of problems, from those arising in pure and applied research to everyday issues and questions. It may include such dimensions as ability to apply math skills, judge reasonableness, communicate quantitative information, and recognize the limits of mathematical or statistical methods.

Critical thinking

the ability to think in a way that is clear, reasoned, reflective, informed by evidence, and aimed at deciding what to believe or do. Dispositions supporting critical thinking include open-mindedness and motivation to seek the truth.

Information literacy

according the Association of College and Research Libraries, the ability to "recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use the needed information" for a wide range of purposes. An information-literate individual is able to determine the extent of information needed, access it, evaluate it and its sources, use the information effectively, and do so ethically and legally.

Written communication

*no glossary item for this category

APPENDIX B: Visuals (Preliminary Drafts)

Teams independently developed concept maps and images during sessions. The following images are preliminary drafts that may warrant further consideration and development.