

October 13, 2006

Proposed Method of Consideration
Information Literacy Working Group
UND General Education Task Force

It is proposed that adoption of the recommendations of the IL Working Group be brought up for a vote at the 10/20/06 mini-retreat as the following separate motions:

1. Wording will be incorporated into the statement of program philosophy and description of General Education at UND (i.e. front matter) that explicitly identifies the importance of information literacy in our society and that Gen Ed at UND will address this issue.
2. The final wording of the Critical Thinking goal (or its equivalent) will specifically stress the role information usage and analysis in critical thought.
3. The final wording of the Communication goal (or its equivalent) will incorporate the idea that communication is typically undertaken with a goal or outcome in mind (which may include the transmission of knowledge) and effective communication should be judged in terms of satisfying these goals.
4. Indicators for each program goal should be broadened to include expression and analysis in other media such as visual/aural/performance arts.

September 22, 2006

Proposal – Information Literacy Working Group
UND General Education Task Force

For the purposes of this proposal, Information Literacy (IL) is defined (per the Association of College and Research Libraries) as the ability to:

- Determine the extent of information needed for a given situation
- Evaluate information and its sources critically
- Access the needed information effectively, efficiently, ethically and legally
- Incorporate selected information into one's knowledge base
- Use information effectively, ethically and legally to accomplish a specific purpose
- Understand the economic, legal and social issues surrounding the use of information

The Information Literacy (IL) working group has come to understand that IL is a key characteristic of lifelong learning and an important component of scholarly inquiry. We feel it to be so important and so fundamental to generally educated citizens, in fact, that we advocate its incorporation into the philosophical underpinnings of our program (i.e. the philosophy statement or front matter preceding the actual program description). We make this recommendation based on the fact that each of the three proposed program goals (Critical Thinking, Communication, Diversity) contain aspects of IL as defined above. Reviewing the definition of IL along with both the current general education goals and the proposed working goals it is clear that IL, though not explicitly addressed, runs through the heart of what we hold dear in Gen Ed.

We suggest that a fourth sentence be inserted into the 'What is Essential Studies at UND' section that reads:

ES courses will help you gain an understanding of the critical role information literacy plays in our society and you will learn how to access, evaluate and apply information effectively, efficiently and ethically in a variety of contexts.

We suggest the critical thinking goal be reworded to specifically stress information usage and analysis. We also suggest that the communication goal be reworded to incorporate the idea that communication is typically undertaken with a goal or outcome in mind (sometimes simply the transmission of knowledge).

In addition, we advocate that the indicators for each of the program goals be broadened. For example, alternative methods of expression (communicating information) such as audio and visual are consistently neglected. Analysis of such expression certainly represents critical thinking and must incorporate some appreciation for a diversity of perspectives and experiences.

No additional resources are required to implement this recommendation. No additional program requirements are necessary save the deliberate incorporation of information literacy indicators into the definitions of the program goals and their assessment.

What is Essential Studies at the University of North Dakota?

Essential Studies (ES) is the academic core of your university experience. It exposes you to the fundamental ideas and intellectual activities that characterize a broadly educated person. The courses offered in the ES curriculum provide broad and diverse perspectives on how human beings think and feel, solve problems, express ideas, and create and discover new knowledge. ES courses will help you gain an understanding of the critical role information literacy plays in our society and you will learn how to access, evaluate and apply information effectively, efficiently and ethically in a variety of contexts. These courses also help you acquire the skills essential to university-level learning: they challenge you to think critically, communicate effectively both orally and in writing, and increase your understanding of the role of culture in a diverse world.

Why are you required to take Essential Studies courses?

UND requires its undergraduates to take a number of Essential Studies courses out of the deep conviction that living a successful and satisfying life demands a breadth of knowledge and a wide range of intellectual skills. Whatever your area of specialization or career plan, this knowledge and these skills will enable you to establish a basis for life-long learning as a person, a professional, and a member of the larger community.

What is the best way to select Essential Studies courses?

When you choose your Essential Studies courses, we encourage you to venture into areas that are new, interesting, or arouse your curiosity. By choosing courses that range outside your current experience, you will gain opportunities to explore questions and issues that can cause you to grow and expand your knowledge and awareness. UND also encourages you to choose ES courses that complement each other, so that you can extend what you learn in individual courses. By linking courses in this way, you can develop the ability to make connections between them and draw on their ideas and traditions to address the complex, multi-faceted questions of life in the 21st century.

What are the defining features of Essential Studies courses?

Although Essential Studies courses vary considerably in both content and format, they are all designed with some common purposes in mind. First, regardless of content, each ES course will address at least one of the common goals of the Essential Studies Program (see below). As a student, you will be asked to think seriously about these goals and to help assess the extent to which the course has helped you achieve them. Second, each ES course will be designed to keep you actively engaged in your own learning. This means that, whether your class is large one or small, whether it is a general introduction to the discipline or a closer look at a special topic, you will have opportunities to ask questions and participate in discussion, facilitated, where appropriate, by innovative teaching and learning technologies.

Goals of Undergraduate Education -- University of North Dakota

Goal #1: Critical Thinking

You should be able to evaluate information and make reasoned judgments about its validity and applicability. You should be able to analyze and synthesize information, in all forms, to draw sound conclusions and make reasonable judgments.

Rationale: The ability to make informed choices and decisions based on reliable information and careful reasoning is one of the hallmarks of an educated person. In this category, we include both quantitative and qualitative reasoning.

Example Indicators. Written, oral, visual, aural or performance assessments that require you to:

- determine the nature and extent of required information in a particular context
- evaluate the logic, validity, and relevance of information and its sources
- analyze complex information in a variety of forms either quantitatively or qualitatively
- synthesize information, arguments, or quantitative data in order to arrive at reasoned conclusions
- propose resolutions to problems and questions by considering alternatives and broader implications

Goal #2: Communication

You should be able to effectively express ideas and convey information to others in a variety of formats to achieve specified goals.

Rationale: The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is a skill that is needed not only on the job but in personal and civic life.

Example indicators: Written, oral, visual, aural or performance assessments that require you to:

- access and organize information to form persuasive arguments
- effectively use individual or group settings to make oral presentations to achieve specific goals
- present information clearly and effectively in written form to achieve specific goals
- delivery effective arguments in alternative formats including aural, visual and performance

Goal #3: Diversity

You should be able to demonstrate an understanding of the ways culture affects perspective in a multicultural world, and use that understanding to address issues, solve problems, and shape personal and professional behavior

Rationale: Because the United States is becoming a much more diverse society, and because we are living and working in a multicultural world, it is vitally important that we develop an understanding of and appreciation for cultures different from our own. This understanding is crucial not only in the world of work, but in our role as citizens of a global society.

Example indicators: Written, oral, visual, aural or performance assessments that require you to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture and its significance for understanding behavior or addressing problems
- demonstrate sensitivity to cultural differences when dealing with other students, community members, or potential employers/employees
- demonstrate an understanding of their own culture as seen from the perspective of others
- demonstrate an understanding of the economic, legal and social impacts of information usage
- access information ethically and legally