

Why do we need to revise our General Education Program?

And why now for Pete's sake?

Introduction

Shippensburg University maintains its General Education program with respect to two PASSHE Board of Governor (PASSHE BOG, 1993, 1990) policies: *General Education at State System of Higher Education Universities (1993-01)* provides the context and guidance for providing all undergraduate students with a shared experience that fits squarely into the broad concept of liberal education¹; and *Academic Degrees (1990-06-A)* requires students in all Baccalaureate degree programs to successfully complete “at least 40 semester credit hours” of study “focused on competencies consistent with the liberal education learning outcomes as defined in Policy 1993-01.”

The need for program revision is now: presented in four arguments

Shippensburg University's current General Education program is aligned with the two PASSHE BOG policies described above, but it must now revise its program to reflect major changes to the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's (MSCHE, 2014) *Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation*, to program changes made by other PASSHE intuitions, and to changes occurring across the landscape of higher education.

Argument #1: Middle States expects all of its institutions to assess student learning

The Middle States Commission for Higher Education (MSCHE) issued new accreditation standards in 2014 that become effective for all MSCHE institutions, including PASSHE institutions, starting with those that have self-studies due during the 2017-18 academic year (e.g., Shippensburg). Notably, MSCHE eliminated its General Education standard (formerly Standard 12) and placed some former parts of it into *Standard 3: Design and Delivery of the Student Learning Experience*. According to the new standards document and the MSCHE representatives that spoke at the 2014 MSCHE Annual Meeting, an accredited institution possesses or demonstrates:

- A. student learning experiences that are designed, delivered and assessed by faculty ... who are rigorous and effective in: 1) teaching, 2) assessment of student learning, 3) scholarly inquiry, and 4) service;
- B. organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty or appropriate professionals using defined and meaningful curricular goals with defensible standards for evaluating whether [or not] students are achieving those goals.
- C. a general education curriculum that helps students to develop competency in *at least*:
 - ⇒ Oral communication
 - ⇒ Written communication
 - ⇒ Scientific and quantitative reasoning
 - ⇒ Critical analysis and reasoning
 - ⇒ Technological competency
 - ⇒ Information literacy
 - ⇒ Study of values, ethics, and diverse perspectives

It is clear that MSCHE expects Shippensburg to place assessment of student learning on par with teaching, service, and scholarly growth and that it considers core competencies to be cross-disciplinary in nature. The omission of competencies associated with reading and creative expression is sad, surprising and short-sighted, but the list above is not a complete checklist; rather, a list of minimum (“*at least*”) requirements. Our General Education program needs to be reorganized around clear goals and cross-disciplinary objectives to foster periodic assessment of student learning, periodic program assessment, and sustainable faculty workloads.

¹ The term ‘liberal education’ does not draw its meaning from the current political connotation of the word ‘liberal’; rather, it represents the time-tested approach to learning that “provides students with broad knowledge of the wider world” [i.e., a general education] and “in-depth study in a specific area of interest” [i.e., each student’s chosen major](Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2014).

Argument #2: Assessment is good reflective teaching practice

Assessment is a reflective process that professional educators use to evaluate strengths and weaknesses in their programs, teaching practices, and student learning. In the past, reflective assessments, if done at all, could be informal; rigor varied widely by program and educator. Today, assessments are recognized nationally as formal peer-review processes that normalize expectations across curricula, focus on measurable learning outcomes, and reveal strengths, weaknesses, and tacit assumptions (Berrett, 2015). Assessments are earnest attempts to answer questions like:

- ☞ Are we communicating clearly with students about what they are expected to learn and why they are expected learn it?
- ☞ Are we communicating clearly with students about how their work will be evaluated?
- ☞ Do our assignments, quizzes, exams, etc., evaluate students on the material they are expected to learn or on other material that we tacitly assume they know or should know?
- ☞ Are we providing our students with ample and sufficient opportunities to learn what they are expected to learn?
- ☞ Are we providing our students with ample and sufficient opportunities to demonstrate that they've learned what they are expected to learn?
- ☞ What have our students learned and how well have they learned it?

The answers to such questions, if acted upon, prompt and guide valuable improvements to student learning, teaching practice, the quality of interaction between student and educator, and the quality of the institution.

Argument #3: The structure of our program makes it impossible to assess student learning sustainably

The structure of our General Education program reflects the list of recommended cross-disciplinary competencies in PASSHE BOG policy (PASSHE BOG, 1993), yet many of our program goals and learning objectives are not cross-disciplinary. Also, most of our learning objective statements actually contain vague or nested sets of objectives, which makes assessing student learning cumbersome and onerous to do. Since Shippensburg last tried to evaluate its program (2006-2008), it has become unavoidably clear that we are unable to conduct meaningful periodic assessments of the program and all of its participating courses, nor can we demonstrate consistently and clearly what our students are learning. These fatal flaws stem not from the tremendous efforts that faculty members put into teaching and helping students learn, but from the structure of the program itself. If our General Education program was reorganized around clear goals and cross-disciplinary objectives, then that new structure would foster periodic assessment of student learning, periodic program assessment, and sustainable faculty workloads.

Argument #4: Our program is growing too large by staying the same

Our program should better reflect the PASSHE BOG *Academic Passport and Student Transfer Policy (1999-01)*, which allows students to transfer up to 45 general education course credits from qualifying institutions. Most PASSHE institutions that have revised their general education programs since 2009 have reduced the minimum credit requirement of their core programs to 45 credits or fewer and, hence, prompted our program to grow comparatively large (and old). If Shippensburg also reduced its minimum credit requirement (to 45 or 42 credits), then it could align its program with the transfer policy and compete better for transfer students (SU, 2013: AMP Strategy B.4). A smaller credit requirement would also provide Shippensburg students with much needed flexibility to pursue dual-major, minor, and certificate programs and it would dampen the impact of the amended *Academic Degrees Policy (2012-13)*, which identifies a new subtype of course called "directed general education."²

² A 'directed general education' course is any general education course that is "prescribed" or "required" by a major program. Directed general education courses may still be used to satisfy the content requirements of major programs, but any credits associated with such courses must be counted toward the general education credit requirement only and not counted toward the major credit requirement. This policy took effect August 15, 2015.

The plan to move forward

APSCUF leadership and the Provost, in 2009 and in anticipation of changes to the MSCHE accreditation standards, collaboratively formed the Academic Master Plan Task Force to develop new visions for the division of Academic Affairs and the academic future of the university. The Academic Master Plan (AMP)(SU, 2013) describes these new visions and identifies desired General Education Program reforms. The new MSCHE accreditation standards are, in parts, reflected by the tactics listed in AMP Strategy E:

- Establish a process and mechanism for the *periodic review and revision* of the general education curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of 21st- century students and workers
- Create and support a process to identify, develop, and implement *core experiences and cross-curricular initiatives*.
- Develop strategies for the *continual emphasis of core competencies* (writing, oral communication, quantitative reasoning, critical thinking, developing habits of the mind, and global understanding) *throughout the curriculum*.

Summary

New MSCHE accreditation standards, new PASSHE BOG policies, trends across the landscape of higher education, and our own master plan point to a strategy of General Education program reform that includes:

1. Changing the minimum credit requirement of the program to 42 or 45 credits.
2. Simplifying the program and reorganizing it around a few cross-curricular program goals, each with a few clear learning objectives.
3. Revising the program in a way that allows periodic assessments of student learning and the program itself to be accomplished sustainably.
4. Using assessment results to improve student learning, teaching practice, the quality of interaction between our students and educators, and the quality of the institution.

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Faculty forum about our General Education Program

Hosted by the General Education Council
October 2 and October 8, 2015

Why do we need to revise our General Education Program?

And why now for Pete's sake?

Institution	Last major program revision	Retrenchment letters sent to individuals
West Chester	exp. 2017	
East Stroudsburg	exp. 2017	2010 , 2013, 2014
Edinboro	2015	2013
Kutztown	2014	2010
Lock Haven	2014	
California	2013	
IUP	2013	
Bloomsburg	2012	
Millersville	2012	
Mansfield	2011	2010, 2013
Slippery Rock	2011 (w/ minor changes in 2015)	2013
Cheyney	2009	2014, 2015 ?
Clarion	2007 (w/ minor changes in 2014)	2013, 2014
Shippensburg	1985 (w/ minor changes in 2000)	2015 ?

* Source: Mary Rita DuVall, Head of Labor Relations, State APSCUF



Four arguments for program revision

1. MSCHE expects all of its institutions to assess student learning.
2. Assessment is good reflective teaching practice.
3. The structure of our program makes it impossible to assess student learning sustainably.
4. Our program is growing too large by staying the same.



Middle States Commission on Higher Education

Argument #1

Problem: Middle States CHE expects all of its institutions to assess student learning.

Middle States Commission for Higher Education

Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (2014)

An accredited institution possesses or demonstrates:

- III.1 student learning experiences that are designed, delivered and assessed by faculty ... who are rigorous and effective in: 1) teaching, 2) assessment of student learning, 3) scholarly inquiry, and 4) service;
- III.8 periodic assessment of the effectiveness of programs providing student learning opportunities.

Middle States Commission for Higher Education

Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation (2014)

An accredited institution possesses or demonstrates:

III.5.b a general education curriculum that helps students to develop competency in *at least*:

- ⇒ oral communication,
- ⇒ written communication,
- ⇒ scientific and quantitative reasoning,
- ⇒ critical analysis and reasoning,
- ⇒ technological competency,
- ⇒ information literacy,
- ⇒ and study of values, ethics and diverse perspectives.

SHIP Academic Master Plan (2013) Strategy E

A collaborative vision of APSCUF and the Provost

“Establish a process and mechanism for the periodic review and revision of the general education curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of 21st- century students and workers.”

- ⇒ Develop and implement **cross-curricular** initiatives.
- ⇒ Emphasize core competencies **throughout the curriculum.**

Argument #1

Problem: Middle States CHE expects all of its institutions to assess student learning.

Solution: Reorganize our program around cross-disciplinary goals and objectives to promote assessment.

Argument #2

Professionalism: Assessment is good teaching practice.

Assessment is good reflective teaching practice

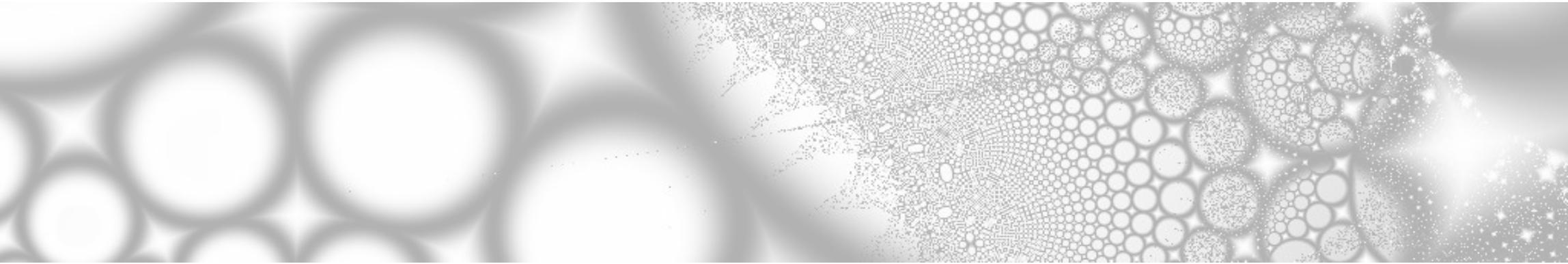
Find strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and tacit assumptions

- ⇒ Are we communicating clearly with students about what they are expected to learn and why they are expected learn it?
- ⇒ Are we communicating clearly with students about how their work will be evaluated?
- ⇒ Do our assignments, exams, etc., evaluate students on the material they are expected to learn or other material that we tacitly assume they know?

Assessment is good reflective teaching practice

Find strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and tacit assumptions

- Are we providing our students with ample and sufficient opportunities to learn what they are expected to learn?
- Are we providing our students with ample and sufficient opportunities to demonstrate that they have learned what they are expected to learn?
- What have our students learned and how well have they learned it?



Argument #3

Problem: The complex structure of our program makes it impossible to assess student learning sustainably.

PASSHE Board of Governor policy

General Education (1993-01): Recommendations

1. Skill in forms of inquiry [logical thinking, inductive / critical reasoning]
2. Communication skills [reading, writing, speaking, listening]
3. Numeracy
4. Natural and social sciences
5. Historical consciousness
6. Social, economic, political & environmental interdependencies
7. Human experience and perspectives
8. Appreciation of art and literature
9. Recognize and analyze ethical issues

Our distribution requirement

Name	Credits
Writing competency	3
Math competency	3 - 4
Communication	3
History	6
Categories of knowledge	
A	3
B	9
C	9 - 12
D	6
E	6
Diversity	0* - 3
Total:	48 - 55

Our distribution requirement

Learning objectives

Name	Credits	
Writing competency	3	8
Math competency	3 - 4	1
Communication	3	7
History	6	6
Categories of knowledge		
A	3	5
B	9	3
C	9 - 12	5
D	6	3
E	6	5
Diversity	0* - 3	5
	Total:	48
		55

EX: Writing competency, Learning objective #2 (of 8)

“Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to write essays that meet conventional academic expectations for clarity, organization, paragraphing, and grammatical control.”

EX: Writing competency, Learning objective #2 (of 8) actually contains 4 objectives.

“Upon successful completion of the course the student will be able to write essays that meet conventional academic expectations for clarity, organization, paragraphing, and grammatical control.”

Students will be able to ...

... write essays that meet conventional academic expectations for $\left. \begin{array}{l} \textit{clarity} \\ \textit{organization} \\ \textit{paragraphing} \\ \textit{grammatical control} \end{array} \right\}$.

EX: Category E, Learning objective #1 (of 5)

“Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to summarize, analyze, and evaluate the relevant principles, theories, research, and research methods that are essential to understanding the behavior of individuals and groups.”

EX: Category E, Learning objective #1 (of 5) actually contains 24 objectives.

“Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to summarize, analyze, and evaluate the relevant principles, theories, research, and research methods that are essential to understanding the behavior of individuals and groups.”

Students will be able to ...

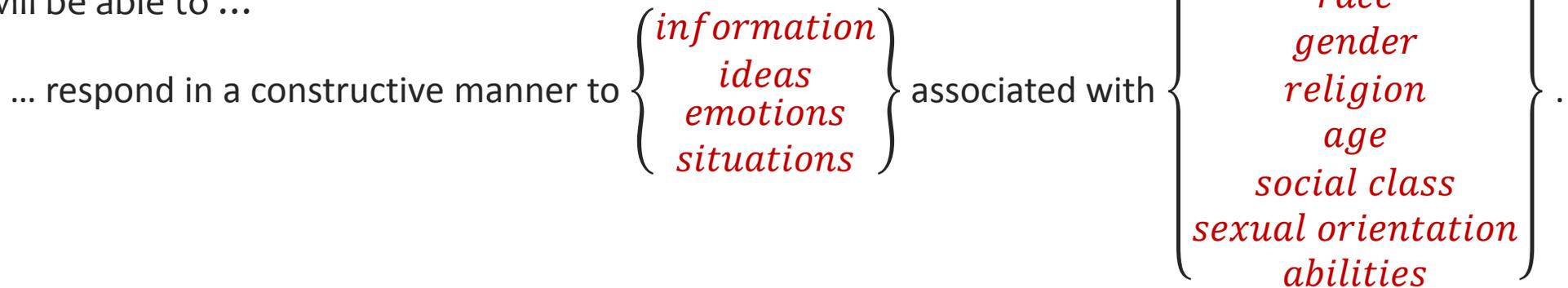
$\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{summarize} \\ \textit{analyze} \\ \textit{evaluate} \end{array} \right\}$ the relevant $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{principles} \\ \textit{theories} \\ \textit{research} \\ \textit{res. methods} \end{array} \right\}$ that are essential to understanding the behavior of $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \textit{individuals} \\ \textit{groups} \end{array} \right\}$.

We have too many objectives lurking in our stated objectives.

EX: Diversity, learning objective #3 (of 5) actually contains 36 objectives.

“Upon successful completion of this course, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to respond in a constructive manner to information, ideas, emotions, and situations associated with issues of diversity, including culture, ethnicity, race, gender, religion, age, social class, sexual orientation, and abilities”

Students will be able to ...



Current GenEd program requirements

Learning objectives

Name	Credits		Actual
Writing competency	3	8	*
Math competency	3 - 4	1	*
Communication	3	7	*
History	6	6	*
Categories of knowledge			
A	3	5	10
B	9	3	7
C	9 - 12	5	14
D	6	3	12
E	6	5	35
Diversity	0* - 3	5	64
Total:		48 - 55	48

> 150 

Argument #3

Problem: The complex structure of our program makes it impossible to assess student learning sustainably.

Solution: Simplify the program and reorganize it around clear program goals with fewer learning objectives.

Argument #4

Problem: Our program is growing too large by staying the same.

PASSHE Board of Governor policy

Academic Degrees (1990-06)

Students in all Baccalaureate degree programs are required to successfully complete “at least 40 semester credit hours” of study “focused on competencies consistent with the liberal education learning outcomes as defined in Policy 1993-01.”

GenEd program credit requirement

Name	Credits
Writing competency	3
Math competency	3 - 4
Communication	3
History	6
Categories of knowledge	
A	3
B	9
C	9 - 12
D	6
E	6
Diversity	0* - 3
<hr/>	
Total:	48 - 55 are greater than 40.



PASSHE Board of Governor policy

Academic Passport and Student Transfer Policy (1999-01)

“Up to a maximum of 45 general education credits” can be transferred to meet “general education requirements, even if the receiving university does not offer the specific course being transferred or has not designated that course as general education. A course by course match shall not be required.”

Most PASSHE institutions that have revised their general education programs since 2009 also reduced their minimum credit requirements to 45 credits or fewer and, so, aligned their programs with this policy.

Institution	Last major revision	Current cr. requirement	Former cr. requirement
West Chester	exp. 2017	48, but new TBD	
East Stroudsburg	exp. 2017	42 + 3	50
Edinboro	2015	45 + 3	48
Kutztown	2014	39, 48, 48	60
Lock Haven	2014	42	42
California	2013	40-44	49-51
IUP	2013	48	48-53
Bloomsburg	2012	40	53
Millersville	2012	39 + 3 + 6	51
Mansfield	2011	42-44	55
Slippery Rock	2011 (w/ minor Δ in 2015)	45-46	51-52
Cheyney	2009	51	57
Clarion	2007 (w/ minor Δ in 2014)	48	48
Shippensburg	1985 (w/ minor Δ in 2000)	48-52	



Argument #4

Problem: Our program is growing too large by staying the same.

Solution: Reduce program size to 42 or 45 credits.

How we can move forward

1. Change the minimum credit requirement to 42 or 45 credits.
2. Simplify the program and reorganize it around a few cross-curricular program goals, each with a few clear learning objectives.
3. Revise the program in a way that allows periodic assessment of student learning to be accomplished sustainably.
4. Use periodic program assessment to improve student learning, teaching practice, the quality of interaction between our students and educators, and the quality of the institution.

Faculty forum about our General Education Program

Thank you for coming!

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PASSHE Board of Governor policy

Academic Degrees (2012-13) amended

A **directed general education course** is any general education course that is “prescribed” or “required” by a major program. Directed general education courses may be used to satisfy the content requirements of major programs, but any credits associated with such courses must be counted toward the general education credit requirement and not counted toward the major credit requirement.

This amendment took effect August 15, 2015.



SHIP Academic Master Plan (2013) Strategy D

A collaborative vision of APSCUF and the Provost

“Develop an entry-year experience for all incoming students, including transfer students, to facilitate their transition to the university, to increase students’ connection to and engagement with the university community, to increase student retention and success, anchor students in the disciplines, and to improve the academic climate on campus.”



SHIP Academic Master Plan (2013) Strategy E

A collaborative vision of APSCUF and the Provost

“Establish a process and mechanism for the periodic review and revision of the general education curriculum to ensure it meets the needs of 21st- century students and workers.”

- ⇒ Develop and implement **cross-curricular** initiatives.
- ⇒ Emphasize core competencies **throughout the curriculum.**



GEC: Program Committee

College of Arts & Sciences

A&H: **Doug Birsch** and **Paris Peet**

B&SS: **Cynthia Botteron** and **Karl Lorenz**

M&NS: **Sherri Bergsten** and **Kate Shirk**

College of Business **Brian Wentz**

College of Education & Human Services **Jen Clements**



October 2nd Open Faculty Meeting Grove Forum

Issues Discussed

The main driver for reform is the new Middle States standards, which requires assessment of student learning for each and every standard.

Another driver for reform is the inability to assess our current program.

FM - Challenge from HCS that the method used to count the number of learning objectives was misguided. It was up to faculty teaching the course how to tease out the objectives in a way appropriate to the course material and discipline. The question was asked whether doing this on a competency-base made assessment more straightforward.

The question then came up several times – is this really an assessment problem or a program problem and shouldn't we first figure out what is going on programmatically and fix that before upending the entire thing? In essence, come up with better assessment of our current program rather than changing our program to assess it.

GEC – The new Middle States Standards require assessment of competencies that our current program does not address. So, at a minimum, the current program needs to be updated to reflect these additional competencies. Without restructuring the program at all, more learning objectives need to be added to an already cumbersome set. Restructuring the program is the best option because doing so would allow us to re-focus on student learning and streamline the program by including the missing learning objectives and reconsidering/purging extant learning objectives that are cumbersome or nearly impossible to assess.

FM - If it is a question of program assessment vs. student learning assessment? (i.e., that we cannot assess student learning given the way our objectives are currently written?)

GEC – The current program was assessed in 2009. What we learned then is: a) the current structure of our GenEd program places an extraordinary burden on faculty to assess completely (owing to the extremely large numbers of stated and embedded learning objectives); and b) many of our learning objectives are nearly impossible to assess consistently across the program (owing to the *post-hoc* way that learning objectives were created ~ after the program was created and not necessarily aligned with student learning, but aligned with departmental turf).

FM - If a new program goes through, it was emphasized that the GEC Assessment and Program Committee had to provide guidance on how to assess, including instruments, time frames, etc.

GEC – Of course. It is a best practice to assess one or very few learning objectives each semester, program-wide. This practice allows the campus community to collaboratively seek clarification and guidance (and the GEC to provide both), and to normalize expectations about baseline, above average, average, and below average competency levels across the curriculum. Ideally, time frames would be linked with our normal 5-year and 1-year program review cycles.

Discussions about assessment in general.

FM - When first year experience is implemented, that would be the beginning point of assessment for the Gen Ed program – old or new?

GEC – This is an open question.

One point was made about identifying specific classes that were not [helping students to achieve the desired learning objectives] and whether or not the Gen Ed Committee could go back to that class specifically. I was unclear about the answer – GEC does the assessment in other programs and individual courses are not targeted.

Institutions that are doing well in terms of assessment, are they using standardized instruments? Discussed the Values Rubrics written by the AACU. It was noted that the effort by the Program Committee in devising rubrics was frustrating and forcing all competencies into a 3x3 matrix was arbitrary, misinformed about pedagogy, and did not pay heed to the learning objectives. It was noted, when HCS said they used their professional organization's rubric, that it was inappropriate for GEC to force something else.

GEC – The Program Committee does not have any authority “to force” anything; only to make recommendations to the GEC, which department representatives on the GEC vote to ‘approve’ or ‘not approve.’ Last year, the Program Committee solicited advice from multiple departments regarding how they currently assess student learning. Some gave their advice. Any miscommunication about “forcing” was unintentional.

This moved to a discussion about the difference between having a rubric that measured whether a competency had been learned vs. whether the competency had been well used. The example was the English department rubric. It is not appropriate for a non-English department to have a rubric that measures if the student ‘learned’ how to write, but that it would be very useful to have a rubric to evaluate how well a student wrote (practiced).

The distinction it seems:

<i>I – Competency Introduced</i>
<i>P – Competency Practiced</i>
<i>A – Competency Assessed *** Just my thought.</i>

Another driver for reform was a general trend away from content-based programs to competency-based, with the explicit aim of encouraging cross-disciplinary courses.

FM - First question was whether competencies were being generated internally or externally.

FM - Second, if different disciplines are receiving the same tag, how is assessment possible?

Discussion ensued about departments receiving a tag getting together to standardize assessment of the competencies.

The question then came up about incentives to change over to this system. The Middle States transition from 3-legged stool to the full '4-legged chair' was discussed. [A faculty member] expressed the concern that when learning is assessed cross-disciplinarily that there was potential threat to discipline standards and integrity.

Concern expressed that there was a general movement emphasizing national outcomes and objectives, national instrumentation for assessment that ignored discipline standards. The Core Curriculum moves up to university.

{Remember, our CBA is built on the 3-legged stool so the Middle States 4-legged-chair comes into direct contradiction with our contract.}

The Elephant in the Room (Digging a Big Trench then Digging it again... Retrenching!)

After presenting the 'Retrenchment' vs. 'Gen Ed Reform' slide, many challenges arose on that point. There was a need for you to update the chart as several schools did in fact have retrenchment letters on the table post-gen ed reform.

GEC – During the Oct. 2 session, some of the dates on the slide in question reflected the issuance of "general" retrenchment letters while other dates reflected the issuance of retrenchment letters to "individual" faculty members. The data on the slide were corrected before the Oct. 8 session to reflect only "individual" letters (using data sent by Mary Rita DuVall @ State APSCUF).

FM - One suggestion on this point was to seek a letter from the President/Provost that NO faculty jobs would be lost as a result of Gen Ed reform.

Suggestions

FM - To achieve the goal of reducing the program size, consider eliminating one science requirement and re-think the diversity requirement.

FM - Another suggestion was made to bring Middle States here and ask them for guidance in terms of whether we are going in the right direction or not. {I talked to Sara about this today and she said Middle States will not do it without an enormous cost outlay to the school.}

GEC – This was an idea that surfaced at both sessions. We consulted with Dr. Sara Grove and she reported that Middle States will not visit campus or provide such guidance without enormous cost to the university. Nor will they "pre-approve" anything before their review.

Other Topics

A great deal of frustration was expressed in that everyone keeps hearing that something was coming but no program draft ever emerges. Difficult to have an actual discussion when there is nothing on the table. People would like to see alternative programs.

GEC – The GEC has been frustrated by the release of new accreditation standards and the "general" retrenchment letter, both of which required rethinking and, hence, slowed the process.

GEC – Take a look at the NIU-Plus program @ Northern Illinois Univeristy (NIU), which is a new general education program that’s been designed around a clear set of 8 student learning objectives.

FM - There is an incompatibility between PASSHE and Middle States in terms of what they want from their Gen Ed curriculum: Middle States, competencies; PASSHE, content oriented. The question was whether AAAT or GEC Assessment could work with departments to blend the two requirement sets together. Page | 4

FM - If/when new program comes out, the Tags/objectives must be very very clearly laid out and each and every step about grandfathering in courses, assessment rotations, etc. must be very explicit.

Meeting ended.

These are the notes to the best of my ability to write fast and to remember!

Cynthia B.

FM - Idea expressed by a faculty member

GEC - Idea expressed by the General Education Council

Italicized text indicates a summary of a discussion or ideas expressed by the note-taker.

Comments are a summary, not exact quotes. I couldn't keep up with the conversation for exact quotes.

Meeting opened at 3:35 pm with presentation and handout

Comments during presentation:

FM - If Middle States is now adding assessment as a separate item from teaching, scholarship and service, will tenure and promotion processes on campus now include this as well?

GEC - That is an open question for the Tenure & Promotion committee to consider.

FM - HCS 100 addresses the (Middle States) list of objectives, but this may or may not be revealed in assessment.

FM - There are too many objectives to assess in the current program.

FM - Has Kutztown (w/ 3 GE programs) had a Middle States review recently?

GEC - The answer to this question was not known at the time, but subsequent research found their next self-study review will occur during the 2017-2018 AY. So, it's coming.

Comments after presentation:

FM - There was a guarantee of no retrenchments being caused by GE program revision in the past. Can we get another letter of guarantee from the provost/administration that reorganization of GE program will not lead to faculty retrenchment?

GEC - This has not been pursued yet, but the Program Committee of the GEC can be tasked by a motion of the GEC.

FM - I believe that such a letter would help the process along.

GEC - What if the provost says "no"?

FM - That is information that the faculty needs to know to make an informed decision.

FM - We should be drawing on assessment data to inform changes.

FM - Data is appreciated, but the current program is not assessable.

FM - Two faculty members of my department were retrenched and relocated from other PASSHE campuses due in part to GE redesign. Less GE may be good for

sciences, but not good for social sciences where we introduce students to depth and breadth of subject material. Many of our majors find their way to us through the GE program.

GEC – We have a pressing need to assess 1/3 of the credits (dollars) that students are taking (spending) to fulfill their liberal arts degree requirements. These credits (costs) are in the GE program. Our program needs to be assessable *and* competitive among our sister institutions.

FM - Is there any data that parents or prospective students actually compare and contrast GE programs?

GEC – That is an open question.

FM – I think this would be positive for transfer students. It would give students choice in what they want.

FM – That the new program is needed to align with Middle States is the strongest argument. Could we just pare down objectives in subcommittee to make assessment feasible?

GEC – That was among the first things that the Program Committee considered, but much of our current program does not align with competencies. Our program reflects 20th century thinking of compartmentalized GE. We are being prompted to move forward to 21st century cross-disciplinary GE.

FM – Assessment and Program subcommittees did look at skills section of current program. It is challenging to write learning objectives and rubrics that capture all courses in current program.

FM – Our “pass” from Middle States was lucky with the assessment that we had of current GE program. We need to be more creative and flexible. We should consider that colleges other than A&S may be able to fulfill GE requirements with their courses.

FM – It’s a marketing issue to allow other colleges to offer GE and attract students.

FM – We each have a specialized body of knowledge. For example, many courses have writing, but WIFYS is still very much needed. Everybody cannot teach all things.

GEC – This is not a conversation about specialized turf. This is a campus-wide conversation about cross-disciplinary learning objectives.

FM – Who designates “tags”?

GEC – The General Education program is a university-wide program and the faculty is having a conversation about its structure. Past practice suggests that departments would seek to participate in the new program by applying to position their courses as they see fit.

FM – We're talking about why we're moving forward. The major driver is assessment, so the new program should first have clear assessment goals and procedures.

GEC – The first thing is to develop a skeleton/framework based on learning objectives, then create the process for periodic assessment of student learning associated with those objectives, then populate the program with courses where they belong to help students learn what we expect them to learn.

FM – Look at Middle States recommendation: Critical analysis could be applied to arts. It would be easy to build that rubric for assessment.

FM – The arts all share that they “analyze”, “describe”, etc. That would be true for all.

FM – Can the assessment be designed to be better with the current program? If this is assessment driven, we should start with assessment and see if we need to change.

FM – The assessment subcommittee doesn't write the learning objectives.

GEC – Program change should help us meet Middle States requirements, but we should also protect what is good about our current program.

FM – We don't have a clear idea on what Middle States actually wants.

FM – Middle States will not come to campus and give a preview. They have told us that assessment matters, and that faculty involvement in the assessment matters.

FM – The new program then has to have a clear idea on how assessment will occur.

GEC – Six people went to Middle States conference and collaborated on what they heard. This document (hand out and presentation) reflects that group interpretation on what Middle States wants.

FM – Could we include 300 and 400 level courses in GE?

GEC – That's a great idea and one that the Program Committee considered for a long time, but the new PASSHE BOG policy (2012-13) effectively prevents this from happening.

FM – [*question about middle states that I didn't catch*]

GEC open forum for faculty
8 October 2015

Notes taken by KBShirk

FM – Middle States' goal is that educational programs should be intentional and thoughtful about student learning objectives and outcomes. If we are put on warning, that is not cost effective. We would have a loss of federal funding for our students, it would damage our reputation, we would have the additional costs of more intermediate reviews.

FM – Can we streamline objectives for the current program?

GEC – We are missing some of Middle States' new objectives, so these need to be added.

FM – Sociology does assess technology competency.

FM – We may need to move courses from one category to another after doing that.

GEC – Yes, a program designed intentionally around student learning objectives (instead of department-based clusters) might prompt some departments to move their courses into new or other areas.

Meeting ended.

FM - Idea expressed by a faculty member

GEC - Idea expressed by the General Education Council

Italicized text indicates a summary of a discussion or ideas expressed by the note-taker.

Faculty responses given during the digital session of the Open Faculty Forum regarding General Education Program renewal.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Did you attend one of the face-to-face (on campus) Open Forums?	Did you read through the previous content regarding General Education reform?	Are you familiar with the content of the current (December 2014) Middle States standards for accreditation?	After reviewing the justification for General Education reform at Shippensburg University, do you believe that there is a	After reviewing this material, what are your comments, thoughts, or suggestions regarding the need for General Education Reform at Shippensburg University?
2	No	No	No	Yes	
3	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Undecided	I selected undecided, because as was discussed in the forum I attended, our current program works and may just need a face lift, not a complete overhaul.
4	No	No	Vaguely aware	Yes	GE classes should not be reduced in number, but should have smaller class sizes.
5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	I believe that we can meet the requirements without a complete overhaul of the system. Course changes and substitutes could allow us to meet the requirements and simplify meeting the standards without starting from scratch.
6	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	I am glad that the committee sees the omission of reading as short-sighted; certainly we can work in reading into the other goals if not as a \"separate\" goal.
7	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
8	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	Our General Education program is outdated and needs to be updated based on the needs of the students. For example, society is being transformed by technology and we currently do not provide our students with the necessary technology awareness.
9	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	I believe competencies based from common assessment anchors will illustrate the rigor of our gen eds
10	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	
11	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	I believe that there are many reasons why general education reform is necessary here at Shippensburg, including maintaining accreditation, providing program flexibility, improving the ability to properly assess, and embarking on a culture of regular evaluation and updates to a program that takes up a significant portion of our students credits while at Shippensburg.
12	No	No	Vaguely aware	Undecided	if you want faculty engagement/involvement in this process then bag the survey and meet with the faculty face-to-face.
13	No	Yes	Yes	No	The Gen Ed courses with which I am most familiar (i.e., HIS 105 and HIS 106 in my Department) have clear assessments already in place. The proposals that I have seen for revision with regard to these specific courses have far more nebulous assessments. Moreover, the History Gen Ed courses have a clear global focus, which is essential to a 21st century education. The proposals for reform which I have seen or heard about which do away in one form or another with these two courses (HIS 105 and 106) have less direct requirements for global education for our students.

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14	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	No	The push for cross-disciplinary GE content seems to be out of touch in some cases. Some content areas can easily be cross-disciplinary (like the scientific method for evaluating cause and effect). But, other ways to go cross-disciplinary seem to be more ridiculous: should French be cross-disciplined with Biology? Should Sociology be cross-disciplined with Physics? To what benefit? To just toss out phraseology like it\'s a hamburger is a problem. "Argument #3: The structure of our program makes it impossible to assess student learning sustainably." Lost me here. Once again, the use of a current hot word "sustainably" seems to be employed without any real clear reason. This argument seems completely void of rationale or merit. In the document, a list of six assessment questions is raised. A well-written syllabus attends to the majority of these. A program design is not warranted to address any of these assessment themes. This supplies no rationale for a new GE program at all. "Argument #4: Our program is growing too large by staying the same" "A smaller credit requirement would also provide Shippensburg students with much needed flexibility to pursue dual-major, minor, and certificate programs." Is anyone paying attention to the fact that many of our programs are impacted or are severely gpa restricted? When students can't cut the mustard in a science-based program, they are left with very few choices as we have no liberal studies degree that would allow them to create a program of study. Dual major students will be few and far between unless they are in the top, say, 10% of students. No one else will have much of a chance due to class size controls and dwindling faculty numbers. We can't even get our students to complete minor programs without much resistance from the sponsoring departments due to impacted class offerings. This argument might be the weakest of them all and none of them seem very strong. This is not to say that the GE program cannot be improved. However, the sweeping changes that have been proposed seem to create a far from intuitive approach to strengthening the GE program. If nothing else, we should start the proposed revision insuring that it makes practical sense. I don't feel that we are there at this time.
15	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Undecided	
16	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Go for it!
17	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	We need to DO something, not talk about it for 10 more years.

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18	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	A major improvement would allow programs more leeway - through UCC curriculum process - in identifying a general program that is sensible for its students. For example, allowing sciences to require different technical competencies than liberal arts; or recognizing the differences between Math, Ethics, and Computer Science for \"Logic and Reasoning\"
19	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Too many history requirements. Not enough technology. Where are Education, Exercise Science, Business Courses? There are plenty of very relevant courses outside of Arts and Sciences.
20	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	
21	No	Yes	Yes	No	While I would support the change in credit load to allow for more transfer students, frankly the learning outcomes and goals (critical thinking, oral communication, scientific analysis etc) are already well covered and well taught by faculty.
22	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
23	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	none
24	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	I believe that the past GE design served its purposes well enough, and this revision is long overdue. I also feel that making this revision work will have to go well beyond potential turf battles that departments may engender.
25	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	I hope that the Gen Ed curriculum be revised having the students\' needs and interests in mind as opposed to departmental wishes.
26	No	Yes	Yes	No	Gen Ed doesn\'t need reform. Just go a better job of assessing it. Major restructuring should not happen in a time of crisis. Wait a few years.
27	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	Change always seems to be scary, but it does not have to be. Giving people more concrete examples of what the reformed program would look like (e.g. samples of those cross-disciplinary objectives & goals) may make the change easier to visualize, and therefore not so scary.
28	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	There is clearly a need - even without the push from Middle States. The idea of a mish-mash content based program is so.... 70s. Students can pretty much go on line and find out any bit of information they want, what they need and are failing to get in schools is the ability to READ well, WRITE well, THINK well, and to understand the limits, ethics, and appropriateness of the information-rich world we now live in.
29	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	The extent of reform should be to work with what we already have, not totally create something new. I don\'t accept the idea that we can\'t reform what we have so that we can assess it more effectively. The case for total reform has not been made effectively.

Faculty responses given during the digital session of the Open Faculty Forum regarding General Education Program renewal.

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1	No	No	Yes	Yes	
30	No	No	Yes	Yes	
					I think the current gen-ed curriculum is dated and really is in need of revision. However, it seems to me that there has been a strong inertia make this process dragging on for years without fruitful outcomes. A better gen-ed curriculum that is more up to date and is accompanied with a better assessment process will serve our students better and help Ship attract more students to reverse the declining trend in enrollment numbers. I think its time for the GenEd Council and Ship faculty in general to put in political will and make hard decisions to get the reform/revision done. In terms of curriculum. I think at least the categories could be more open to courses from other departments across campus. This will help enable cross-disiplinary teaching/learning, and also make use of all available resources at Ship to help serve our students better. For example, I could clearly see multiple courses that are currently offered by the college of business that could cover one or multiple listed competency/knowledge requirements. However, our current gen ed curriculum does not include a single course from the business curriculum in any of the existing categories. I believe our gen-ed curriculum would be better if it opens up opportunities for participation from all colleges across campus.
31	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
32	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
33	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	
34	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
35	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Undecided	

Faculty responses given during the digital session of the Open Faculty Forum regarding General Education Program renewal.

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36	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	I am deeply troubled by this survey and its clear biases and manipulative attempts to portray only one side of the issues relating to GEC revision rather than also providing other reasonable perspectives on these issues as were found in the forums. This one-sided portrayal of the issues and choices available are deeply disturbing. Reasonable faculty members have provided compelling arguments that our institution can fulfill accreditation standards without a wholesale reform or revision of our General Education Program. I find question \"4\" particularly disturbing as this document claims to be an \"open forum\" but allows for no debate or discussion and ends with a vote on the need for reform after providing a one-sided discussion of the issues. To my knowledge, this document, particularly question #4 was not vetted by the entire GEC. This questionnaire appears to violate the most basic principles of openness, fairness, and true dialogue. The implications of the dissemination of such a document are frightening indeed.
37	No	No	Vaguely aware	Yes	Yes, the student body is changing along with external expectation of/for graduates.
38		Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	It is quite overdue and has been blocked for selfish reasons rather than concern for student welfare.
39	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	I think the model should move to simplicity (no tags or other ridiculous ideas). I think students should have areas they must fulfill but also have choice too. The current model that was proposed would be incredibly different for students and advisor to understand and that will result in ERRORS..... no helpful with graduation and retention issues.
40	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Undecided	
41	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	
42	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	I think 3 Gen ed category B and 3 Gen Ed category C is too much! I think one should be replaced with a \"Personal Financial Planning\" course, or a \"Technology course\" such as MIS 142. Both would help students much more than what is on the books now.
43	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
44	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	
45	No	Yes	Yes	Undecided	Everything on the previous page was very well documented and explained until you said that the current system is unassessable. Where is the evidence for that? And if that evidence does exist, that seems to be reason to fix the assessment tools, not NECESSARILY revise the entire Gen Ed program.
46	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	I think 42 credit is a good number and we should make it happen.

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47	No	Yes	Yes	No	A lot of energy for no good purpose.
48	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The need for reform is there, but the commitment to do so may not be. Reforming the GenEd program will require some sacrifice on the part of some members of the university community. Allowing students more flexibility so they can take a double major that will enhance their skill sets and knowledge base when they leave SU is a selling point to attract new students to the university. But some academic programs at the university may have an advantage over others in attracting those students who want to double major or minor in particular programs. That means some departments will lose student numbers and FTE's resulting in the loss of faculty lines. GenEd classes bring in a lot of money for some departments whose numbers have been declining in terms of the number of majors they serve. I'm not sure those departments would be willing to sacrifice those GenED numbers because it would mean fewer faculty lines and less money for their departments. A strong liberal arts focus is essential, especially in the area in which I teach "a broad knowledge base is essential in the professional world of my major. But even I know that I would like my students to be able to focus more in particular areas and less so that in others. That basically means the number of credit hours for the GenEd program could be reduced and the majors in my department would still be able to get a solid foundation of liberal arts knowledge that would serve them well in the future.

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49	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	It needs to be done, and should be driven by academic goals, not protection of current departments or academic turf. If there is a concern about impact on departmental FTEF, that should be addressed by a phase-in process. There are several critical needs that I haven't seen much addressed in what has been done so far. (1) Writing skills. I see a lot of our former students in graduate classes, and compared to students from other similar institutions, their writing frankly stinks. In addition to the required composition class, I'd like to see an extensive requirement for 'writing across the curriculum' classes (similar to what Millersville does), with appropriate class sizes and faculty support. (2) Higher level gen ed courses. Students should not be taking 1.5 years worth of totally introductory 100-level gen eds in addition to whatever 100-level coursework they do in their departments. There needs to be a mechanism for them to take second courses in the same department, and a requirement for some of their gen ed to be at a more advanced level. (3) Science skills. I am OK with dropping the third science requirement so long as at least one of the remaining two science courses is a rigorous course that includes an inquiry-based lab or field component. The process of science cannot be learned from textbooks and lecture alone. (4) Class size. This relates to the previous comment. It is difficult to teach a serious science class to 45 students with no labs--85 is ridiculous (taking our gen eds to 100+ is being seriously proposed). Somehow the impact of class size on the general education experience should be incorporated into our general education guidelines.
50	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	Global awareness is not well defined and/or specified. Financial literacy should be addressed, considering the fact that many college graduates are in deep debts upon graduation.
51	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
52	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	No	
53	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	No	I believe that we don't need to reform the program, we just need to more clearly describe how our current program meets Middle State's standards. Perhaps simply reworking our learning outcomes would be sufficient.
54	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	General education reform should be tied to protecting faculty who teach courses in the program from retrenchment, otherwise reshuffling the deck becomes a convenient justification by the administration to downsize the faculty.
55	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	

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56	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	No	The Gen Ed program seems fine the way it is. Students are exposed to necessary reading, writing and critical thinking skills along with basic bodies of knowledge. Given that our students are becoming weaker, they NEED the current program.
57	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	No	
58	No	Yes	Yes	No	I would suggest revising the CURRENT PROGRAM in order to match assessment to Middle States standards rather than overhaul the general education program entirely.
59	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	No	Was this a forum or a push-poll?
60	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	This survey is extremely leading and biased. There have been other thoughts and ideas about general education reform that the first page of this forum completely ignored.
61	No	Yes	Yes	No	The current program is working fine.
62	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
63	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	This survey is extremely misleading, and did not reflect any of the public input from the open forums. I attended the forums, and the sense of those in attendance was dubious to hostile about pursuing what this survey terms \"reform.\" Question #4 is particularly misleading, because many people support the ideas of dropping a Category C course and improving assessment of the General Education program, but would reject the premise that \"own master plan point to a strategy of General Education program reform\" as outlined by the GEC. The GEC Program Committee seems immune to public input, and fixated on a single path to revising general education--a program that has very little public support. I hope the committee will take the time to stop trying to force through a single proposal, and actually listen to the faculty who took the time to attend the public forums and to share their views on how we can strengthen the program without this crazy, convoluted, and wholly unworkable system of tags. We need better assessment, and frankly better marketing of the current program. The \"reform\" program will not accomplish anything that cannot be accomplished with our current program.
64	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
65	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	
66	No	Yes	Yes	No	
67	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	No	

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68	No	Yes	Yes	No	The GE reform initiatives are flawed. The present research and current trends are not sufficient to justify the revamping of current practices. Additionally, this initiative has been refaced several times over the last 8 years. There has not been a proposal that truly aligns with out students needs. While there may be some room for reform, I have not heard one proposal that is in the best interest of our students.
69	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	Make sure changes being made are ones to benefit the academic experience of the students, not just made to address budgetary issues. I believe the current required skills courses (WIFYS, HCS 100, HIS 105 & 106) are all crucial to developing a skill set students need for academic success in upper level courses and should definitely be retained.
70	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	I think we can approach this only if there is an agreement that faculty lines are not in danger
71	No	Yes	Yes	No	The information included here demonstrates there is a need to make adjustments to the Gen Ed program to comply with Middle States protocols. However, this does not seem to require \"reform,\" if \"reform\" means throwing out the existing framework and creating a new program from scratch. I would much rather see incremental steps that enjoy wide faculty support than trying to ram through a completely new and potentially divisive program.
72	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	
73	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	
74	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	We have bigger fish to fry than redoing Gen Ed. I do not buy the arguments presented here or at the meeting. I am not in favor of changing anything until we have a new contract in place. Also, with the annual threat of retrenchment, Gen Ed revision is likely to be more politically-based than intellectually-based. When I looked Northern Illinois University (NIU) as the suggested model of a school that Middle States was pleased with, I found a program that was remarkably like the program we threw out in 1985. President Ceddia wanted a program with fewer courses and more focus plus two courses in World History. NIU\'s alleged cross-disciplinary component is not in the school\'s catalog and won\'t come onboard until at least the next academic year. So much for trying to let Middle State run the show.
75	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	

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76	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Should not cut specifically one area or another, instead students should select from a greater variety of courses in more inclusive categories. Also reducing STEM classes should not be considered as there is a major national effort to have all students more knowledgeable in the STEM disciplines.
77	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	
78	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	It\'s needed to keep our accreditation. What we have now is antiquated and not clear to non-academics.
79	No	Yes	No	Yes	
80	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
81	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	I am not convinced that the essential purposes of general education as part of a well-rounded educational experience are being sufficiently considered nor their dynamics beyond individual courses seriously contemplated.
82	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
83	No	Yes	Yes	Undecided	Though the GEC's aspirations for reform are laudable, the current proposed plan seems more complex than the existing gen-ed system and unlikely to achieve the GEC's laudable aspirations.
84	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	It's definitely time that we get this done!

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85	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	We are not competitive with the number of general education courses that we currently require. For teacher training programs, the number of general education makes it nearly impossible for us to meet the PASSHE requirement to graduate students within 120 to even 135 hours for some majors. Increasing requirements from the PA Dept. of Education (i.e., 9 credit hours in special education & 3 credit hours in teaching English Language Learners) increased the number of courses required for students in all colleges who are seeking teacher certification. The GEC should include options = from the college of business and the college of education and human services. Financial literacy is essential for our students as they enter the workforce and begin enter adulthood. At a minimum, EEC 273 - Introduction to Exceptionalities in the College of Education should be an option for students as a general education choice. EEC 273 already fulfills a diversity requirement and is increasingly chosen as an option for students in the disability studies minor. It is essential that we see move from viewing the general education requirements as something students have to "get through," but rather as courses that both provide breadth and depth. Students should have an option as to whether they want more depth or breadth. In education, because there are absolutely no electives of any kind, the general education curriculum should permit encourage students to learn broadly, but also give them the flexibility to tailor their GE courses to support their professional courses.
86	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	
87	No	Yes	Yes	No	
88	No	Yes	Yes	No	
89	No	Yes	No	Yes	

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90	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	I believe there is some need for reform, and I understand the need for assessment. However, just because the assessment of our Gen Ed program was a spectacular disaster the last time around doesn't mean that the Gen Ed program itself is fatally flawed, but rather than the assessment was poorly designed. Each of our current categories could be assessed using the criteria you've outlined in the justification without the dozens of micro-assessments that were attempted last time around. The biggest flaw I see in the current proposal, however, is in the tags. The proposed model effectively eliminates any literature requirement at the university--which is completely contrary to the idea of a liberal arts education and which simply doesn't reflect best practice at practically any university you could look at. If you want students to integrate learning of ethics and values with analytical and critical thinking, there's a huge amount of data showing that literary study is the way to go. This is not a territorial issue; it's a way of honoring our traditions and promoting the liberal arts and humanities at a university where those have long been foundational fields of study. The proposed reform essentially ignores (or at best, minimizes) any kind of creative expression, and yet programs in the arts at Shippensburg are growing. I acknowledge that our Gen Ed program is somewhat antiquated, but I cannot support the proposed reform in its current state. The fact that there has been such strong resistance and the Gen Ed committee has struggled so much to articulate its vision, with no significant progress, should suggest that the proposed revision is unworkable.

Faculty responses given during the digital session of the Open Faculty Forum regarding General Education Program renewal.

	A	B	C	D	E
1	Did you attend one of the face-to-face (on campus) Open Forums?	Did you read through the previous content regarding General Education reform?	Are you familiar with the content of the current (December 2014) Middle States standards for accreditation?	After reviewing the justification for General Education reform at Shippensburg University, do you believe that there is a	After reviewing this material, what are your comments, thoughts, or suggestions regarding the need for General Education Reform at Shippensburg University?
91	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	I protest against this justification. It ignores the need for liberal arts, including and especially literature, in building creative corporations that are the best in the world and our nation and our democracy that are among the top in the world, according to Fareed Zacharia, in an article "Why America's Obsession with STEM Education is Dangerous." Zacharia writes, "America overcomes its disadvantage â€” a less-technically-trained workforce â€” with other advantages such as creativity, critical thinking and an optimistic outlook." He provides the reason: " Chinese leaders Jack Ma, the founder of Chinaâ€™s Internet behemoth Alibaba, recently hypothesized in a speech that the Chinese are not as innovative as Westerners because Chinaâ€™s educational system, which teaches the basics very well, does not nourish a studentâ€™s complete intelligence, allowing her to range freely, experiment and enjoy herself while learning." Mark Zuckerberg, a liberal arts student, and Jeff Bezos believe in importance of a liberal arts education; Bezos emphasizes the importance of writing in the humanities, as Zacharia explains. The following provides source of Zacharia's evidence and a compelling explanation: "For most of its history, the United States was unique in offering a well-rounded education. In their comprehensive study, 'The Race Between Education and Technology,' Harvardâ€™s Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz point out that in the 19th century, countries like Britain, France and Germany educated only a few and put them through narrow programs designed to impart only the skills crucial to their professions. America, by contrast, provided mass general education because people were not rooted in specific locations with long-established trades that offered the only paths forward for young men." Please read and discuss Zacharia's argument for a liberal education. I required students to write an essay on it and they overwhelmingly agreed with Zacharia. Putin says the strength of America is its creativity.
92	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	I'm concerned about the elimination of the Gen Ed literature requirement specifically and bothered in general by the way this would impact creative expression on campus--IAP, Music/Theater, etc. I recognize the importance of STEM and skills training, but at a certain point, and I fear we're heading in this direction, we'll turn the university into workforce training.
93	No	Yes	Yes	No	The suggested revisions are indeed short-sighted in their lack of a requirement for literature, art, or music. Much of the historical justification for General Education is developing well-rounded citizens, and this proposal will not do this.

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1	Did you attend one of the face-to-face (on campus) Open Forums?	Did you read through the previous content regarding General Education reform?	Are you familiar with the content of the current (December 2014) Middle States standards for accreditation?	After reviewing the justification for General Education reform at Shippensburg University, do you believe that there is a	After reviewing this material, what are your comments, thoughts, or suggestions regarding the need for General Education Reform at Shippensburg University?
94	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Undecided	
95	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	The humanities should be valued in the General Education curriculum. Not only as through separate disciplines, (or through compartmentalized approaches) but through a pedagogy that values interdisciplinary approaches to education. Why can't our students learn through the same model that our "honors" students do, for example? We should be working together to consider how our separate courses might dove-tail and address common issues and themes in order to reinforce student learning, cognition, critical thinking, and application across the board.
96	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	You should NOT cut literature as a requirement. Your proposal cuts virtually all classes having to do with creative expression. I strongly oppose your proposal.
97	Yes	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	reform needed. Think reform should add classes on personal financial planning, budgeting and using technology--work and excel especially

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98	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	<p>I am completing this survey for a second time, having only realized after completing it the last time that there was little additional opportunity beyond this text block to provide more detailed input. What I think requires much deeper consideration in seeking to design a cross-disciplinary program that targets the set of competencies identified by Middle States is the dynamic interaction among learning experiences that would produce more powerful learning in any of these areas. To put it briefly, there is reason to think that a shopping mall selection of somewhat random courses which each try to meet/advance learning outcomes related to these competencies is an inefficient and less powerful way of developing student learning across these competencies. The old system clearly was a poor way of delivering these kinds of competencies to students in an effective way, but it seems unlikely that a newer, trimmer version of the old system would do better. As an example, consider what the learning of students across several competencies might be if they experienced a cluster of courses that spoke to each other thematically or in ways that built on shared learning processes. Rather than taking a history class, a literature class, and a science class—each unrelated to the others—imagine that these three classes spoke to each other in some way, dealt with a common question, theme, or period. The ways of thinking that might be varied across these courses would complement each other, complicate each other, and in doing so would produce something larger than the sum of the parts. (There's research out there that suggests that developmentally this is valuable.) If we try to preserve the course-by-course approach to general education as the only delivery system going forward, we will continue on a path that is more like our current one than unlike it. When we try to refocus on "competencies" we inevitably look at the parts instead of the whole, the integration, the synergy of interdisciplinary education. There's a conceptual problem here: We are applying a fragmenting, analytic approach to student development, but there's every reason to believe that integration, connection, and leverage of connected experiences is where the best cost/benefit lives. I understand that there are institutional, logistical, and other problems in moving toward a kind of educational design that is not driven by departmental boundaries, voting blocks, and fragmentation. But I guess what I would propose is that if we are going to reform without a definitive "effective solution" that we know will produce the result of powerful learning for all students, then it would make sense to test pilot more than one way that the target competencies could be achieved and see what kinds of results might be produced by different alternatives. As I say, there are reasons based on research to believe that a fragmented, learning-outcome-to-competency based curriculum might not be as powerful as a more integrative experience. For that reason, while reform is needed (and has been for quite a long time), there needs to be a period of testing out of reform possibilities that allows us to see how actual Shippensburg students experience different models of reform. Why not run a</p>

Faculty responses given during the digital session of the Open Faculty Forum regarding General Education Program renewal.

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1	Did you attend one of the face-to-face (on campus) Open Forums?	Did you read through the previous content regarding General Education reform?	Are you familiar with the content of the current (December 2014) Middle States standards for accreditation?	After reviewing the justification for General Education reform at Shippensburg University, do you believe that there is a	After reviewing this material, what are your comments, thoughts, or suggestions regarding the need for General Education Reform at Shippensburg University?
99	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	It is my belief that students need more flexibility in their scheduling options to better fit their personal and professional interests. Additionally, at many of our sister schools, the availability of options and the enhance ability for choice appears to place S.U. behind the ball.
100	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Yes	We should also add some business courses as GEN. I cannot imagine student graduated without any knowledge in business.
101	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Outdated gened is hurting the university and its students. It is outrages to see two departments delaying the process for their personal gain and greed.
102	No	Yes	Yes	No	As far as I can tell, we are meeting the standards and just need to improve assessment. Maybe we need more on the international side, but that's about it. Just reduce the science to prevent 100-person classes.
103	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	I agree that our Gen Ed curriculum needs to be revised. It is burdensome and heavily weighted more toward protecting turf (especially in STEM) than in promoting the values of a liberal arts education, which should be its mission. I see no reason why our students should be forced to take 2 World History courses, a course in Human Comm. (i.e., Speech), and 7 courses in various sciences. I would be in favor of trimming some of the requirements in these categories and offering students more choice. Although Gen Ed clearly needs reform, the type of reform proposed by the GEC seems designed to undermine the objectives and principles of a liberal arts education. Instead what it seems to promote is a technocratic general education better suited to vo-tech or community college. It appears that GEC have imposed a very narrow interpretation of Middle States, assuming that skills of written/oral communication, knowledge of diverse experiences/perspectives, an appreciation for ethical values, etc. can be achieved through some purely instrumental approach to general education. There is no sense in the GEC's approach that appreciation of art, literature, music, modern languages, etc. have any place in the new technocratic model. I believe that many of the basic elements of the current Gen Ed curriculum could be kept, as long as we were able to trim out the excess. If we could reduce the credit hours required from 48 to 39, we'd open up more opportunities for our students to take courses they want.
104	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	There is a need for our students to understand the basic concepts of financial management.

Faculty responses given during the digital session of the Open Faculty Forum regarding General Education Program renewal.

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1	Did you attend one of the face-to-face (on campus) Open Forums?	Did you read through the previous content regarding General Education reform?	Are you familiar with the content of the current (December 2014) Middle States standards for accreditation?	After reviewing the justification for General Education reform at Shippensburg University, do you believe that there is a	After reviewing this material, what are your comments, thoughts, or suggestions regarding the need for General Education Reform at Shippensburg University?
105	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	I don't feel like the General Education committee has been receptive to faculty input. I feel this reform is being forced -- when I went to one of the open forums the faculty that attended brought up questions and concerns that were effectively dismissed.
106	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Last general education reform had strong administrative support. The current administration is too weak. APSCUF should not be used to stall this process. Postponing is helping certain departments and hurting all students.
107	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	No	We should not undertake this kind of curricular reform under threat of retrenchment.
108	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	The argument presented is one for revision of assessment. Middle States requires assessment, previous assessment attempts have been poorly designed, etc ... so we need to change the program? That's a non sequitur.
109	No	Yes	Vaguely aware	Undecided	My response to Q4 was "undecided" in the sense that Gen Ed reform may indeed need reform, but which direction to take the reform needs to be further discussed and clarified.
110	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	A good liberal education is an important part of higher education. But misusing that argument to stop progress is not cool!

Response from the General Education Council's Program Committee regarding the comments and concerns expressed during the Open Faculty Forum, with excerpts from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education's new accreditation standards.

In an effort to inform the faculty across the campus regarding the need for general education reform and to consider its concerns about such action, the General Education Council (GEC) held an open faculty forum with two face-to-face sessions on October 2nd and October 8th, followed by one digital session (November 4 – 16). The GEC's Program Committee was subsequently tasked with reviewing the comments and concerns expressed during the open forums; archiving the comments from the digital open forum and the notes taken at the face-to-face forums (with individual names redacted) on the GEC website, and writing this response.

The GEC appreciates the feedback it received from the faculty (thank you!). This feedback will be valuable as we work toward a plan for general education program renewal that considers the existing strengths of our campus and the needs of our students. It also recognizes the importance of moving toward a General Education program that embraces our liberal arts tradition, prepares students for meaningful citizenship and careers, meets the new standards for accreditation, and establishes a framework for continual program assessment and revision.

General Education program renewal is being discussed not only because continual review and revision of curriculum is essential to providing students with the best educational opportunities, but changes in the academic and political climate have increased pressure to assess and demonstrate appropriate responsiveness to assessment on many levels. There is new pressure on accreditors as well as on educational institutions to show their value. A press release from the U.S. Department of Education (11/06/15) pointed to increased attention on the accreditation process.

“Accreditation's historic function serves as an important protection for both students and taxpayers by assuring the quality of our postsecondary educational system. Since accreditation is a prerequisite for schools' participation in the federal student aid programs, it plays a ‘gatekeeping’ role in institutional access to the annual \$150 billion investment in federal student aid. ... However, there is broad agreement and a sense of urgency about the need for significant improvement in both the rigor and flexibility of accreditation. Secretary Duncan emphasized the importance of a new focus on outcomes and greater transparency in higher education. He noted particularly that accreditors have provided little accountability for some poor-performing institutions and ... that the Department must do more to hold accreditors responsible for their work.”

The Middle States Commission on Higher Education recently released the 13th edition of their Standards for Accreditation, and with the increasing pressures, the GEC is particularly interested in ensuring that Shippensburg University's General Education program meets those standards. Excerpts from the new standards that are particularly relevant to our discussion of general education reform are included below. Shown in bold within the excerpts are points that emphasize the importance of transparent and meaningful assessment as well as competency areas that our current general education program does not fully address. Specific items requested by faculty members are indicated (*) below, including: a bulleted list showing the range of potential negative accreditation actions is provided with standard terminology for those actions highlighted in bold; and information on the Middle States website that summarizes accreditation actions since 2001 that shows an upward trend in the number of warnings issued by the commission. Additional references and links to websites are also given below.

The major themes that emerged during the forum:

Theme One: New Middle States Standards.

Middle States' goal is that educational programs should be intentional and thoughtful about student learning objectives and outcomes. Our current program does not include all of the Middle States' standards (see Additional Document). Minimally, the current program needs to be updated to include those new requirements (competencies). To the question, "Are the competencies being generated internally or externally?" is the answer, Middle States.

This brought up the concern that if national standards were driving the train and national instruments such as the AACU's Values Rubrics were used for assessment, wasn't there a threat to discipline-specific standards? Conversation turned to the idea that departments who wanted to participate in offering classes under a specific competency (i.e., oral or written communication) could create and standardize the assessment tool – working from scratch or from something like the Values Rubrics.

Theme Two: A Program Problem or an Assessment Problem?

The argument presented by the GEC Program Committee was that one of the major needs for reform was assessment. It was suggested that before changing the program, a better assessment of our current program should be done. However, as Theme One points out, the current program does not address the new Middle States Standards. In the 2009 assessment of Gen Ed, which received praise by Middle States, the discovery was that the learning objectives for the Categories of Knowledge were muddled, extraordinarily burdensome for departments/faculty to assess, and many of the learning objectives could not be assessed in a consistent way across departments. That was the finding of the 2009 assessment exercise.

The question was asked whether the current objectives could be simplified/streamlined/pared down in lieu of big program changes, but in itself that does not address the problem that the current program does not meet new Middle States objectives. Adding new objectives onto an already cumbersome (in terms of assessment) program may be something faculty wish to avoid when assessment comes around. As some pointed out, many departments already assess some of the new standards, for example the use of technology. However, this is not intentionally assessed in a way useful to the assessment of General Education as a whole. The GEC Program Committee believes restructuring the program is a best option as it would provide the opportunity to intentionally streamline the program, add in the new learning objectives, and to reconsider purging those objectives that are cumbersome or nearly impossible to assess.

Another issue along this line was the emphasis by Middle States to introduce cross-discipline learning in the General Education program. The question was brought up, if competencies are cross-disciplinary, how is it possible to assess them? (i.e., reasoning in Sociology vs. Art History vs. Biology). It was discussed how all arts, for example, share in the act of analyzing, describing, etc even if the subject of the analysis varies. A rubric, then, could be designed by all departments sharing in that competency based on commonalities.

There was a question about the place for core courses – for example WIFYS or Mathematics – as they taught a specific skill. Conversations ensued and it was the impression of the note taker that a distinction could be made in the use of rubrics that assessed the introduction of a competency (i.e., learning to write correctly) that was department specific (i.e., English) as opposed to the practice of the competency that could be assessed in Gen Ed courses with a 'Written Communication' tag. This would allow departments to ensure disciplinary standards were protected/advanced while aiding other departments in raising the level of student attainment in those competencies.

Theme Three: Implementation

The first step would be to develop a skeleton/framework based on learning objectives, then create the process for periodic assessment of student learning associated with those objectives. The next step would be to populate the program with courses whose learning objectives align with expectations.

The question arose, "Who designates which courses receive which tag?" Past practice suggests that departments would populate the new program by applying to position their courses as they see fit. In essence, first a department conversation would have to take place as to which competency faculty would assess in their Gen Ed courses, after which the course would find its placement in the proper competency category by demonstrating to the GEC how the course meets the associated objectives.

The point was made that if/when a new program goes through, the GEC Assessment and Program Committee had to provide extremely clear guidance on how to assess; including instruments, time frames, etc. GEC responded that best practice is to assess one or a very few learning objectives each semester, program-wide. This practice allows the campus community to collaboratively seek clarification and guidance (and the GEC to provide both), and to normalize expectations about baseline, above average, average, and below average competency levels across General Education. Ideally, time frames would be linked with our normal 5-year and 1-year program review cycles (Note: Not every department/class is assessed each year.)

Over both sessions was the very strongly stated point: If/when new program comes out, the Tags/Objectives must be very very clearly laid out and each and every step about grandfathering in courses, mechanism for how the program is to be populated, assessment rotations, etc. must be explicit.

Theme Four: Retrenchment and General Education Reform

In the face of what was a perception of General Education reform and retrenchment was the comment: Two faculty members of my department were retrenched and relocated from other PASSHE campuses due in part to GE redesign. When the GEC began the process of reform many years ago a letter was on the table signed by President Ruud and Provost Lyman that said "no faculty would be retrenched as a result of General Education reform." There was a suggestion that another letter should be requested from President Harpster and Provost Lyman as it is unclear whether the commitment under the previous letter still stands.

Theme Five: The Mixed Bag

First, a great deal of frustration was expressed in that everyone kept hearing that something was coming but no program draft emerged and it was difficult (even a waste of time) to have a discussion when nothing was on the table. Faculty stated they wanted to see alternative programs/proposals. There are several reasons for the time lag: first, the initial 'draft' that many saw several years ago can no longer stand as Middle States changed its accreditation standards; second, the issuance of the retrenchment letter made movement on the issue very problematic; lastly, meetings held with a large number of departments provided important information to the Program Committee that caused a rethinking of the model. It is the aim of the Program Committee to have before the GEC a draft program in the Spring 2016.

Following on the frustration point is this: it was noted by faculty and GEC that PASSHE and Middle States standards are now largely incompatible. PASSHE standards remain content driven while Middle States moved to a

competency based one. The Program Committee is aware and has been looking for guidance on how to resolve the issue, yet another reason for delay.

Lastly, there was a suggestion that instead of operating in the dark about program reform, we should bring a Middle States representative to campus to serve as a consultant. It is unclear whether a Service for Fee that Middle States offers is appropriate to this context. However, six (6) individuals from GEC Assessment Committee and Program Committee attended a Middle States conference in 2014 and brought back information received there. One point emphasized at the Middle States conference and in subsequent articles about Middle States and accreditation agencies in general is that accreditation agencies are strengthening the oversight/accreditation process in the attempt to stave off what appears to be an effort by the federal government to take over the process. In other words, accreditation agencies are working to prove that the peer review process can be meaningful. Shippensburg, in the 2018-2019 Middle States review will be assessed under the new standards and climate.

-Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Botteron with GEC Program Committee

Excerpts from Middle States Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation, Thirteenth edition (2014)

An accredited institution possesses and demonstrates the following attributes or activities:

Standard III.2. student learning experiences that are designed, delivered, and **assessed by faculty** (full-time or part-time) and/or other appropriate professionals who are:

- a. rigorous and effective in teaching, **assessment of student learning**, scholarly inquiry, and service, as appropriate to the institution's mission, goals, and policies.

Standard III.5. at institutions that offer undergraduate education, a general education program, free standing or integrated into academic disciplines, that:

- a. offers a sufficient scope to draw students into new areas of intellectual experience, expanding their cultural and global awareness and cultural sensitivity, and preparing them to make well-reasoned judgments outside as well as within their academic field;
- b. offers a curriculum designed so that students acquire and demonstrate essential skills including at least oral and written communication, scientific and quantitative reasoning, critical analysis and reasoning, **technological competency, and information literacy**. Consistent with mission, the general education program also includes the **study of values, ethics**, and diverse perspectives.

Standard V.2. organized and systematic assessments, conducted by faculty and/or appropriate professionals, evaluating the extent of student achievement of institutional and degree/program goals. Institutions should:

- a. **define meaningful curricular goals with defensible standards for evaluating whether students are achieving those goals**;
- b. articulate how they prepare students in a manner consistent with their mission for successful careers, meaningful lives, and, where appropriate, further education. They should collect and provide data on the extent to which they are meeting these goals;
- c. **support and sustain assessment of student achievement and communicate the results of this assessment to stakeholders**.

Standard V.3. consideration and use of assessment results for the improvement of educational effectiveness. Consistent with the institution's mission, such uses include some combination of the following:

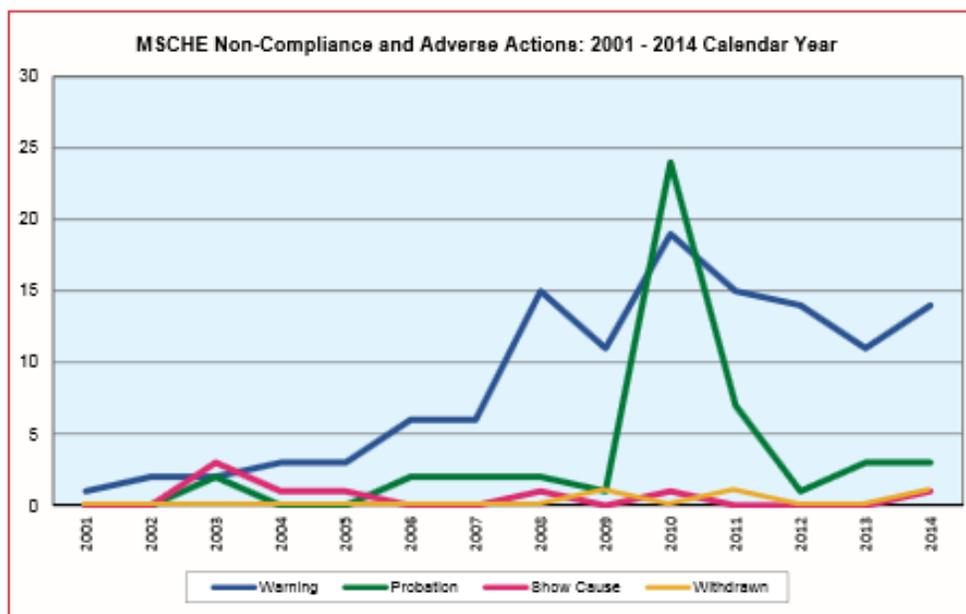
- a. assisting students in improving their learning;
- b. improving pedagogy and curriculum;
- c. reviewing and revising academic programs and support services;
- d. planning, conducting, and supporting a range of professional development activities;
- e. planning and budgeting for the provision of academic programs and services;
- f. informing appropriate constituents about the institution and its programs;
- g. improving key indicators of student success, such as retention, graduation, transfer, and placement rates;
- h. implementing other processes and procedures designed to improve educational programs and services.

MSCHE Policy Statements on Accreditation Actions *

- The Commission **warns** an institution that its accreditation may be in jeopardy when the institution is not in compliance with one or more accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation. A **monitoring report** and a **small team visit** are required to demonstrate that the institution has made appropriate improvements to bring itself into compliance.
- The Commission may place the institution on **probation** at any time if it determines that the institution has failed to address satisfactorily the Commission's concerns regarding non-compliance with accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation in a prior action. This action is accompanied by a request for a **monitoring report** and a **visit** follows.
- Probation may, but need not always, precede an action of show cause. **Show cause** is a non-compliance action requiring an institution to demonstrate why its accreditation should not be withdrawn. The Commission may require an institution to show cause at any time if the Commission determines that the institution no longer meets one or more of the accreditation standards and requirements of affiliation. A show cause action requires an institution to present its case to the Commission for continued accreditation by means of a **show cause report** and an **on-site visit/evaluation**. The institution is required to submit a **teach-out plan** with the show cause report.
- Show cause may or may not result in an adverse action. The Commission may take the following adverse actions:
 - **Deny candidate status** – An institution is denied candidate for accreditation status.
 - **Deny accreditation** – An institution is denied (initial) accreditation. The institution may be permitted to remain in candidate status until it is ready for a new evaluation within the allowable five-year period of candidacy.
 - **Withdrawal of candidate status** – An institution's candidate for accreditation status is withdrawn. The institution must wait two years to reapply.
 - **Withdrawal of accreditation** – An institution's accredited status is withdrawn. If the institution appeals this action, its accreditation remains in effect until the appeal is completed or until the effective date of the withdrawal of accreditation. The institution must wait two years to reapply.
- The Commission must determine whether compliance has been achieved no later than 24 months after the initial non-compliance action was taken. At any time during the 24 month period of non-compliance, the Commission may, at its discretion, continue the institution's non-compliance status and extend accreditation for good cause beyond the original 24 month period. The Commission may extend accreditation for good cause only once and for a maximum of twelve months.
- Adverse actions are subject to appeal in accordance with due process as delineated in the procedures *Appeals from Adverse Accrediting Actions*. An institution retains its accreditation during the appeal. The Commission, in its sole discretion, shall fix the effective date of the withdrawal of accreditation status. The effective date of an adverse accreditation action is not an appealable decision.

MSCHE Literature Promoting Educational Excellence and Improvement *

During 2014, the Middle States Commission actions included 39 reaffirmations of accreditation via self-study; 46 reaffirmations of accreditation via Periodic Review Report; 14 warnings issued or continued; three probations issued or continued; one show cause issued; and one withdrawal of accreditation. During 2015, “about 11% of institutions required follow-up related to their GenEd program after completing self-study, which is up from 4% ten years ago” (statement by Sean McKittrick, Ph.D., VP at MSCHE at the 2015 MSCHE annual meeting).



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