“What should a Buffalo State graduate know?”

Buffalo State College Senate Resolution May 10th, 2013: “And be it further resolved that the College Senate calls for the articulation and adoption of Buffalo State-wide learning outcomes for all students and clarification of the role both General Education requirements and major requirements play in the achievement of those outcomes.”

A.) All College Learning Outcomes Models:

   i) Association of America’s Colleges and Universities “LEAP” (Liberal Education and America’s Promise)

http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm

The LEAP campaign is organized around a robust set of "Essential Learning Outcomes" -- all of which are best developed by a contemporary liberal education:

**Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World**

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

**Focused** by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

**Intellectual and Practical Skills, Including**

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

**Practiced extensively**, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

**Personal and Social Responsibility, Including**

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

**Anchored** through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges
Integrative and Applied Learning, Including

• Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

ii) Alverno College (2,500 students, 47% from Milwaukee, 74% first-generation)

http://www.alverno.edu/academics/ouruniquecurriculum/the8coreabilities/

The eight abilities are the foundation of the Alverno experience.

Communication: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to speak, read, write and listen clearly, in person and through electronic media.

Problem solving: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to determine what is wrong and how to fix it, working alone or in groups.

Social interaction: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to elicit other views, mediate disagreements and help reach conclusions in group settings.

Effective citizenship: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to act with an informed awareness of issues and participate in civic life through volunteer activities and leadership.

Analysis: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to use experience, knowledge, reason and belief to form carefully considered judgments.

Valuing: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to recognize different value systems, including your own; appreciate moral dimensions of your decisions and accept responsibility for them.

Developing a global perspective: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to appreciate economic, social and ecological connections that link the world’s nations and people.

Aesthetic engagement: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to engage with the arts and draw meaning and value from artistic expression.

iii) Bowling Green State University (19,000 students from 50 states and 70 countries, Washington Monthly’s “Best Bang for the Buck” among Ohio publics)

http://www2.bgsu.edu/catalog/University/University8b.html

Even though the learning outcomes are necessarily different from major to major ... all our majors share fundamental educational values, which are described by the University Learning Outcomes. The
University Learning Outcomes are also expectations of our general education program and of the many facets of student life, ranging from residence halls to student clubs and organizations.

**Intellectual and Practical Skills**

- **Critical and Constructive Thinking**
  - Inquiry – a close examination of an issue or situation in a search for information or truth; determining what questions should be asked; recognizing opportunities; formulating hypotheses; seeking information and evaluating claims; making discoveries and reaching new understandings; and making informed judgments.
  - Examining Values – observing carefully and critically to identify the values, principles, standards, or qualities considered worthwhile or desirable in a dilemma, situation, problem, or decision.
  - Solving Problems Creatively – generating a solution for a problem through original, imaginative, innovative, or artistic effort, including problems that are complex, ambiguous, and difficult to formulate.

- **Communication**
  - Writing – communicate clearly and effectively to an identified audience. To be effective, written communication should be informed by audience analysis, demonstrate reflection, employ critical thinking, and make appropriate use of supporting argument and citation.
  - Presenting – speak, show, demonstrate, exhibit, or perform for an individual or group. Effective presentation engages the intended audience, includes the use of non-verbal forms of communication, and may employ a variety of media.

- **Engaging Others in Action**
  - Participating – active engagement in some activity, including shared effort, understanding others’ points of view, the lively exchange of ideas, compromise, and contributing to the group’s product.
  - Leading – guiding or influencing a group to achieve its goals. Leading does not require formal authority or power but rather is a matter of influence, integrity, spirit, and mutual respect.

**General and Specialized Knowledge**

To be an effective and prepared citizen, capable of understanding and responding to the diverse challenges present in the modern world, students must be conversant with the core concepts of disciplines in the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities and arts, along with knowledge related to human learning, interaction, and enterprise. Just as breadth of knowledge is a cornerstone of a liberal education, so too is expertise in a particular disciplinary area or major. Both breadth and depth are important concepts, not just in terms of acquired disciplinary knowledge, but also for development of the skills and methods necessary to explore issues that arise in day-to-day life.
**Personal and Social Responsibility**

BGSU recognizes and intentionally fosters a learning environment in which students strive for excellence, cultivate personal and academic integrity, contribute to a larger community, take seriously the perspectives of others, and develop competence in ethical and moral reasoning, as shown by:

- Interacting with and understanding diverse perspectives.
- Engaging communities as a participant and leader using civic and professional knowledge as a basis for values-driven action.
- Giving full consideration to ethical integrity and actions consistent with one’s principles as part of each individual’s exploration of purpose. A balanced approach to questions of meaning also includes preparation for students' multiple and changing roles, including work, citizenship, family, and membership in multiple communities.

**Integrate, Apply, and Reflect**

*Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies* as evidenced in project-based work systematically collected throughout the duration of the student’s enrollment. Such projects draw on all of the skills and fields of knowledge described above. What has been learned from accumulated experiences is recorded in written reflections.

iv) Miami Dade College (175,000 students, largest and most diverse college in U.S.)

[http://www.mdc.edu/learningoutcomes/](http://www.mdc.edu/learningoutcomes/)

**As graduates of Miami Dade College, students will be able to:**

1. Communicate effectively using listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills.
2. Use quantitative analytical skills to evaluate and process numerical data.
3. Solve problems using critical and creative thinking and scientific reasoning.
4. Formulate strategies to locate, evaluate, and apply information.
5. Demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures, including global and historical perspectives.
6. Create strategies that can be used to fulfill personal, civic, and social responsibilities.
7. Demonstrate knowledge of ethical thinking and its application to issues in society.
8. Use computer and emerging technologies effectively.
9. Demonstrate an appreciation for aesthetics and creative activities.
10. Describe how natural systems function and recognize the impact of humans on the environment.
University of Colorado Boulder Learning Goals for all Boulder Baccalaureate Graduates

Graduates of the University of Colorado will be able to:

- Think critically, comprehensively, and creatively about texts, artifacts, and problems
- Communicate clearly in written and oral forms for various audiences
- Understand and apply high ethical standards to all endeavors
- Formulate and investigate research, creative work, and open-ended questions
- Sustain complex arguments with appropriate evidence
- Locate, evaluate, and apply relevant evidence and technologies to solve problems in their disciplinary areas of study
- Understand and appreciate multiple historical and cultural viewpoints in their social contexts
- Work collaboratively and individually
- Solve problems even with ambiguous, contradictory, and controversial information
- Participate in lifelong learning for professional and personal development

From a previous committee meeting:

All College Learning Outcomes would allow SUNY Buffalo State to describe our degree in qualitative terms, and could be used to clarify the relationships between academic majors, academic minors, and general education. In effect, they could be used to describe and support a coherent curriculum, rather than mere lists of courses.

There is a clear conceptual difference between the models of ACLOs referenced above and the current SUNY requirements.

ALCOs would help with BSC distinctiveness, marketing, rigor, etc, and better allow BSC to respond thoughtfully and well to SUNY pressures for “systemness”

A description of a Buffalo State degree in terms of ALCOs is much closer to what employers claim to seek than what is captured by the current SUNY list of outcomes. ALCOs would also help students and advising- plans of study could be addressed by focusing on where a given student is weakest, which courses complement which, etc.
The committee’s thinking about this issue previously can be seen in the italicized paragraphs above. But now the committee’s job is to lead the discussion on SUNY Buffalo State’s aspirational attitude. Rather than speak about specifics, this committee first wants to make sure the campus agrees on overarching goals and then drill down to specific requirements which could include:

- Should a Buffalo State graduate be able to work productively in a team?
- Are graduates able to write intelligently?
- Can they do higher-order critical thinking?

The committee has identified five models as potential starting points for the discussion. These models can be mixed and matched to our unique campus and student body; all, some or none of the goals expressed in the five models can be adopted as we evaluate our strengths.

The Alverno and Bowling Green models above are the most lengthy and likely will carry the most discussion about the SUNY Buffalo State model. Our job, then, is to determine the next step and so we begin the discussion …

Questions:

1.) What parts or parts do you think we should use from the five plans presented? A corollary would naturally be can Buffalo State guarantee the resources to initiate all of the plans or part of them?

2.) To what extent can we use IF 14 to shape changes and/or direction in things like critical thinking and oral communication?

3.) Is there anything we need to do to improve and/or tweak the writing requirement given the structure now in place with CWP 101 and 102?

4.) What are our existing strengths and how can they be incorporated into something like what Bowling Green espouses: "Integrate, Apply, and Reflect: Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies as evidenced in project-based work systematically collected throughout the duration of the student’s enrollment. What has been learned from accumulated experiences is recorded in written reflections." So should a Buff State grad should be able to reflect on his/her education and articulate on how it applies to an aspirational career goal through a portfolio or some such collection. And a follow-up question would be how do we get specific to Buffalo State?