Members:

J. Grinnell, Chair (Philosophy and Humanities), J. Marren, Chair (Communication)

E. Bergslien (Earth Science and Science Education), E. Boyce (Music), K. Fujiuchi (Library), Melaine Kenyon (Instructional Resources), M. MacLean (Psychology), J. Marren (Communications), D. McFarland (Business), T. Miller (Undergraduate), W. Mitchell (History & Social Studies), A. Nikischer (Adult Ed.), R. Park, (Academic Support Programs, University College), D. Ponton (Provost-Acad. Liaison), D. Potts (Biology) Amy Rosen-Brand, (Disability Services)

Charge: It shall be the charge of the Academic Plan Committee to assist in the intermediate and long-range planning of the overall academic functioning of the college. The Committee shall study the important matters affecting the academic development of the college and recommended changes and/or new proposals. The Committee shall seek the cooperation of faculty, students, administration, professional staff and off-campus consultants. Some of its relevant areas of concern include:

1. Mission of the College
2. Master Plan
3. Regionalism
4. Enrollment Projections
5. Recommendations of Accrediting Agencies

Name of Chair Submitting Report: Joe Marren for Jason Grinnell

Anticipated Vacancies in 2015-2016 for Committee Members: at this point that is still unclear as five of 14 committee members responded.

However, we will need a new liaison because of Provost Ponton’s retirement
Annual Report:

“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

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

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

Aesthetic engagement: Students must demonstrate and master the ability to engage with the arts and

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/)

v) University of Colorado, Boulder (29,000 students, “flagship” and “comprehensive research” university)

[http://www.colorado.edu/pba/outcomes/ug_goals.htm](http://www.colorado.edu/pba/outcomes/ug_goals.htm)

*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 Buffalo 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?

Discussion results

The discussions started off by addressing what is common and also what is unique with the
plans as presented. Obviously, critical thinking and writing topped all five plans and have
parallels here at Buffalo State. However, the thoughts from the groups stated that perhaps these commonalities can be better addressed in a capstone course.

But how, or could, all college SLOs be incorporated and it was thought that maybe a common freshmen experience would do that. The two proposals for a common experience then would be either:

- in a capstone course by discipline
- or in a common freshmen experience

The focus groups we spoke to at the February meeting said that relying on common freshman experiences and/or capstone courses to promote mastery of writing and critical thinking is not a sufficient solution. After all, how can a 3-credit, one semester course really turn someone into a writer/critical thinker for life? We all need lots of practice at these skills in order to learn them. Writing and critical thinking need to be infused throughout the curriculum.

There was no consensus on that in either group. But what was brought up was that if we choose to develop something along the lines of a common freshmen experience then it would have to be different than what we tried to do with BSC 101. To increase the structure, it was suggested that all focus on the same topic tied to IF.

What was also suggested was that we, as faculty, need to understand our students better in order to model the goals. Thus, a relationship with a professor is important since they will learn from us more than from a document.

A common theme across both groups was that more resources are needed to implement measurable objectives. Also, if expectations are high then perhaps a mentorship type of model could/should be added, which also says that more resources are needed.

As to the five specific plans that were presented:

- LEAP: falls nicely within our IF with its integrative and applied learning.
- Alverno: the aesthetic engagement portion could be used at BSC with a holistic approach
- Bowling Green: the prime aspect of that was the stress on breadth and depth of concepts such as leadership and social responsibility; it also asks students to accomplish more within their majors since there is a capstone in every major
- Miami Dade: perhaps BSC needs to have more computer efficiency for our students
Colorado: students have an understanding of historical and cultural viewpoints in social contexts. They are specific enough to guide curriculum development and assessment while being general enough to apply across disciplines. Some SLOs from other sources sound good aspirationally, but they are too vague or difficult to assess.

Although we looked for intersections between different plans, it was also thought that we here should be more innovative, and perhaps need to market that within and outside the community with a catchphrase that captures our academic brand. None were suggested, but on a more micro level it was suggested that our own SLOs are difficult to argue with since they are uniformly bland. So, should they contain more action verbs that, for example, would say that students should be “provoked” or “challenged” to a learning experience? "Challenged" is much better term, especially if it leads to discussions of the college improving its academic rigor. Challenging, hands-on learning experiences that prepare students for life is the image that might attract good students. Add that we are undergraduate focused with professors in the classroom for those considering UB. It was also noted that we need to support students on the basic skills so that they are challenged to want to learn more. And here again, the question of what resources are available comes into play. BUT, how are we going to assess such shifts?

Committee recommendations:

1.) We view this as an opportunity to continue the discussion about curricular issues that could merge the ideas or intent behind the Bowling Green and LEAP programs with our own IF 14 program. Although neither Bowling Green nor LEAP closely mirror our own program, we feel that the SLOs could be a means to an end.

2.) Indeed, there should be a means to measure how we provide the community with graduates who are contributing to the vibrancy of the community. But we need the resources in time, money and equipment/facilities to do this well and to continue the conversation in how to be innovative and challenge our students. We have the opportunity to inspire them to aim high and we need to determine how to inspire students to impact the communities where they will live and/or work.

3.) Taking this a step further, a marketing plan to recruit students must be linked to what we are currently doing and a natural fit to our existing programs. Same with retention programs since the students are already
here. We need academic and support services to retain our core. Setting up Buffalo State as an attractive destination for top regional high school students would have a large number of positive effects on the college and would greatly enhance retention.

4.) Our IF 14 program and whatever adaptations from Bowling Green and LEAP can tie in with the SUNY chancellor’s experiential initiatives such as engaging students both on and off campus in like-minded programs as we apply majors to the experiential learning concepts.

5.) We should play up experiential learning and service-learning if the college decides those are points of differentiation from other colleges, but we also MUST dedicate the necessary resources to make them available to all students.

Other work

A. Increase by 20% the number of students who have an undergraduate research experience [SD 2]

The Provost’s office has been offsetting the Research Foundation’s declining funding of the Undergraduate Research Program. The Horace Mann Fellowships are likely to help in the future, but any expansion of undergrad research will require identifying new funding.

B. Create and support 4 or more faculty interdisciplinary research groups [SD 2]

Continue exploring options in SUNY Networks of Excellence

C. Distinctiveness (McFarland, Marren, MacLean, Boyce) [SD 4]

Continue work in this area

D. Alternative recognition/honors (Rosen-Brand and Potts) [SD 4]

Continue work in this area

E. Student connected-ness (Kenyon and Park) [SD 4]

Continue work in this area