

John,

You have done an excellent job of summarizing what we have done so far and what else needs to be done. I certainly agree with the general outline of the process. I would also agree that whatever we come up with should be submitted to the Faculty Senate. Thanks for doing all of this work.. My comments/suggestions/rambling thoughts are listed below (in no particular order).

As we plan the task forces, we must consider the list of competencies established by the symposium participants, though I think – and your report suggests – that will have to do some interpreting of what these various competencies are as we move to form the task forces. Part of the problem is that it is not clear that participants all meant the same thing when they cited specific competencies. To what extent are we using “critical thinking” and “analytical reasoning” interchangeably? Does “scientific literacy” refer only to the methods of science or to basic knowledge of science as well? I would have never predicted that so many would have spoken of ethics/citizenship. But what do we mean by this?

I am somewhat concerned that even after we define the areas for the Task Forces to examine, your suggested definition of each proficiency level may require a greater degree of specificity than is possible within the time frame in which we are working. To specify a skill in terms of what is required for entry-level or upper division work or professional may be very difficult, at least initially. I am also concerned about the “exemplary” level. If “exemplary” is to mean anything, it would not be attained by everyone. (I assuming that only the truly outstanding are “examples” for others.) If we are talking about the skills, knowledge that all students must have, why have a category that only a few can attain? Maybe I am quibbling about words here.

My concerns about the proficiency levels stem in part from my efforts to develop the critical thinking rubric. It was difficult enough to delineate different developmental stages, but if I had to specify exactly what is required for college-level work and upper division work and so on, I don’t know that I could have completed it, in part because I was able to find very few models that speak to this level of specificity. I think it would be very wise to ask Task Forces to review documents that delineate the different levels of a skill (i.e., entry level, upper division, advance, etc.) but not necessarily specify these different levels in the rubrics they develop. In some ways, ct is easier in this regard than others. I am not sure how one would define citizenship in terms of entry level or upper level.

Trying to develop the ct rubric raised other questions related to this conversation of proficiency levels. What would we envision doing with these rubrics, delineation of skills once we develop them? If some variation of the ct rubric I developed were to be accepted, we would have to require each program to indicate where in their respective curricula these skills are developed and reinforced. Is this how we would see the other rubrics? Are we then presupposing a vertical core? I don’t see an alternative, but I recognize others may not want to affirm this vision of the core at this point.

Having said all of this, I think we need to make a recommendation as to the future shape of the core. I think we should consider recommending the adoption of the AAC&U greater expectations framework as our own.

A crude overview that would combine the symposium outcomes with the AAC&U model would look something like the following:

Empowered Learners – through the development of skills such as

- Writing
- Speaking
- Critical Thinking
- Quantitative skills
- Technology Skills
- Healthy living ??

Informed Learners (informed about, knowledgeable of)

- Nature and the methods of knowing and understanding the natural world (scientific literacy?)
- Society/History and the methods for knowing and understanding them
- Culture (to develop “cultural awareness, sensitivity, aesthetic awareness, etc.)

Responsible Learners –

- Ethics
- Citizenship
- Integration and application of knowledge