

It's pretty straight-up re: E+B: we actively participated several years ago in the development of our institution-wide learning standards, and were/are in strong agreement that these are excellent reflections of our departmental ethos and are entirely consistent with our departmental mission. We have continued to integrate these into our course descriptions/syllabi content, and have made them the core constructs within our plans for on-going assessment moving forward with our strategic vision. We don't emphasize one learning standard over another, but continue to address them as being indivisible in "HOW" we do economics and business department-wide, as they are fully complementary in describing our intent and process of educating undergraduates in E+B.

Dr. David Newton  
Professor of Entrepreneurial Finance  
Chairman, Dept. of Economics and Business  
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Dear Ray,

The English Department took up a discussion of the Six Learning Standards yesterday. Our discussion was concentrated, well-focused, and, I think, fruitful. I want to pass along the most salient points we raised. The following are the points made by department members that were greeted either with tacit approval or with round-table discussion leading to general assent. I pass them on to you as points that I, too, approve and would be willing to explain and defend.

1. Beware of over-specification of ordinances within an institution, as that can lead to paralysis in decision-making and erosion of trust in leadership. Marilyn McEntyre suggests that we read the book The Death of Common Sense, by Philip K. Howard, for a persuasive arguing of that case.
2. We take seriously the urgings by WASC that we simplify our statements and the standards to which we hold ourselves. We also favor not just alignment of our statements but a more radically simplifying synthesis. And we have a fairly strong suggestion to make to which we would like to hear the faculty's response. In brief, we would advocate cutting an entire layer out of the structure of the documents that define our purposes, goals, standards and methods. Specifically, we would advocate eliminating the entire "Six Standards" document from the portfolio. That doesn't mean we want to ignore what the six standards say. They establish important parameters of education here, But we don't want to spend institutional time fretting about whether and how they align with other statements, such as the GE document, or "What We Want for Our Graduates." And we don't want to feel any institutional obligation to use make-shift terminology and semi-arbitrary yokings of concepts such as "Critical-Interdisciplinary" or "Research and Technology."
3. We see the language of the Six Standards as being born out of expediency at the administrative level, specifically from Ed Potts et al in the previous WASC review and out of the committee efforts spawned by the Irvine Grant. That language and our current six standards are not a product of faculty-wide deliberation to the extent that the GE program is. They lack an inspiringly clear, personal, and humane voice such as the one that continues to inspire readers of the document "What We Want for Our Graduates."
4. Having said that, we need to ensure that such important matters as the Christian formation of our students; their ability to think, create, speak and write; their ability to perform high-level research with a practical, spiritual, and philosophical grasp of the implications of high technology; their active engagement in the society around them; and the diversity in the makeup of their community--that such important matters are acknowledged throughout our program and are able to be assessed.
5. We find a deeper scheme, closer to the heart of all we do, in the four main categories of the GE program, especially what is implied in the terms "Contexts," "Inquiries," "Skills," and "Action." I would add, for myself, that the language of Knowledge, Practices, Affections, and Virtues, drawn out of the "Six Standards" document is strong and that these concepts, too, are fundamental to our enterprise. We would readily acknowledge that the GE document does not spell out an entire philosophy of education that encompasses the Chapel program, residential life, athletics, and the whole academic program that is fulfilled through the pursuit of major programs. However, we do not think that the GE program exhausts the students' acquisition of knowledge, mastering of modes of inquiry, perfecting of skills and active engagement in the world beyond campus.

Rather, these four are lineaments of the whole academic and community experience which, if anything, are simply distilled into the GE program and put on display there, almost as advertisements for the wider involvements to come, as both invitations to students and as preparations for the pursuit. Therefore, in the name of simplicity and consistency, we would propose sticking with those terms as the operating outline for our institutional self-assessments. But we would propose expanding it beyond the GE program, so that the GE program appears consistent with that larger program, rather than vice versa. We find some difficulties in the language of the current GE program as well, but those are relatively less of a concern to us than the problems we encounter in the language of the "Six Standards."

6. Whatever is of real value in the current "six standards" is of value because it names a concern that permeates our whole educational enterprise. Currently, however, we do not speak of those six standards as if they are as pervasively important and as inter-related as they really are. We would want to treat the pervasive concerns pervasively across the categories of Knowledge, Inquiry, Skill, and Action that we would propose as a structure for the enlarged scheme within which the GE program would find its proper place.

7. The "Philosophy of Education" statement should be rewritten so that it movingly focuses, explains, and invites all those in the College community to thoughtful and well-grounded participation in the education we want to provide. It should provide the larger context within which the Academic program fits, and the GE program within that. We do not find that the current "Philosophy of Education" document articulates all these ideas in an especially memorable or succinct way, or that it puts forth a philosophy which, if put into practice, would lead to exactly those shorts of practices that we would want to assess. The current statement has a jingoistic tone that gives it less gravity than the purpose requires, and it seems out of touch with the work of the faculty in the other major documents.

So, "Deep Six the 6" would be our counsel, in all seriousness. We found the discussion to be invigorating and the prospects for focusing, simplifying, streamlining, and deeply synthesizing our communal enterprise to be even more so. We hope the Faculty Senate and all those involved in Program Review will find merit in these recommendations.

Thanks for your time.

Randy VanderMey, Chair  
Dept. of English