

From the French Department

Reform of the Gen Ed Curriculum

Current Gen Ed Curriculum & the AAC&U's Learning Outcomes

The course distribution system of the current Gen Ed curriculum attempts at least in breath to mirror the spirit of AAC&U's learning outcomes in that students are given the opportunity to take courses in a broad range of disciplines that gives them an appreciable exposure to various knowledge and skill areas. One main ingredient missing in the current Gen Ed curriculum is a seeming compartmentalization of the disciplines and a lack of integration in the delivery of the disciplines. Oftentimes, students see little to no relationship between one discipline and the other.

The curriculum of the Honors College appears in large measure to respond to the AAC & U's learning outcomes. The largely successful CofC **internationalization efforts** of the last couple of years have attempted in some measure to address the said learning outcomes. Students who participate in the now myriad **study abroad programs** are for the most part beneficiaries of among other things, interrelatedness of knowledge, intercultural sensitivity, consciousness of social and civic responsibilities, and a sense of their role and obligations as members of an interconnected global village.

We in the languages have seen the manifestation of these outcomes in our students both during and after participation in study abroad programs. The French curriculum—as well as the curricula of other languages—emphasizes not just linguistic and cultural literacy in the target language, but the utility of that language in terms of how the language connects with other disciplines and work-related experiences. A typical French language course at every level is actually a study in culture, philosophy, linguistics, history, communication, religion, sociology, geography, arts, architecture, etc.

Besides actually using French in other disciplines like we currently do in business, marketing and art, students in the intermediate and upper-level courses engage in projects that derive from their subject-matter areas. If they are majors, they work on projects in any field of interest to them. Therefore, despite its apparent shortcomings, the present Gen Ed curriculum appears flexible enough to enable each department to pursue curricular initiatives that tend to respond to the AAC&U' learning outcomes.

As stated above, in its current form, the Gen Ed does attempt to meet the AAC &U's learning outcomes. Study abroad programs for example do help students learn in a range of fields, settings and media while concentrating in their major area. The same appears true of students in the Honors program, as indicated above. We are not sure though that strong analytical and general communication skill is yet a component of this outcome. Building on the existing disciplinary requirements, more efforts could be made to build more inter-curricular connections by linking what students learn to a) what they study in other disciplines, b) their intended major/minor and c) their envisioned career goals.

Possible changes or revisions to improve the Gen Ed:

- Giving the opportunity to every CofC student to participate in a study abroad program at least once before they graduate.
- Requiring every student intending to major or minor in a foreign language to do a study abroad program
- Encouraging foreign language majors/minors to take courses in other disciplines while doing study abroad programs
- Providing more opportunities for students to relate foreign language to their fields of interest
- Having language instructors to periodically teach non-language courses in English for other departments
- Identifying faculty in other disciplines with foreign language expertise to teach or team-teach an intro foreign language course
- Providing opportunities for all faculty teaching Gen Ed courses to study abroad periodically
- Encouraging more opportunities for language faculty to develop their knowledge in other disciplines of interest to them, example: marketing, business and economic, history, art, anthropology and sociology, philosophy, media, etc.