



Final Report of the

**General Education Committee**

Cara Davies, John Paul Kanwit, Rob Kleine (co-chair), Shane Martin, Suzanne Morrison, Aiyaswami Prasad, Harold Putt (co-chair), Dave Sawyers

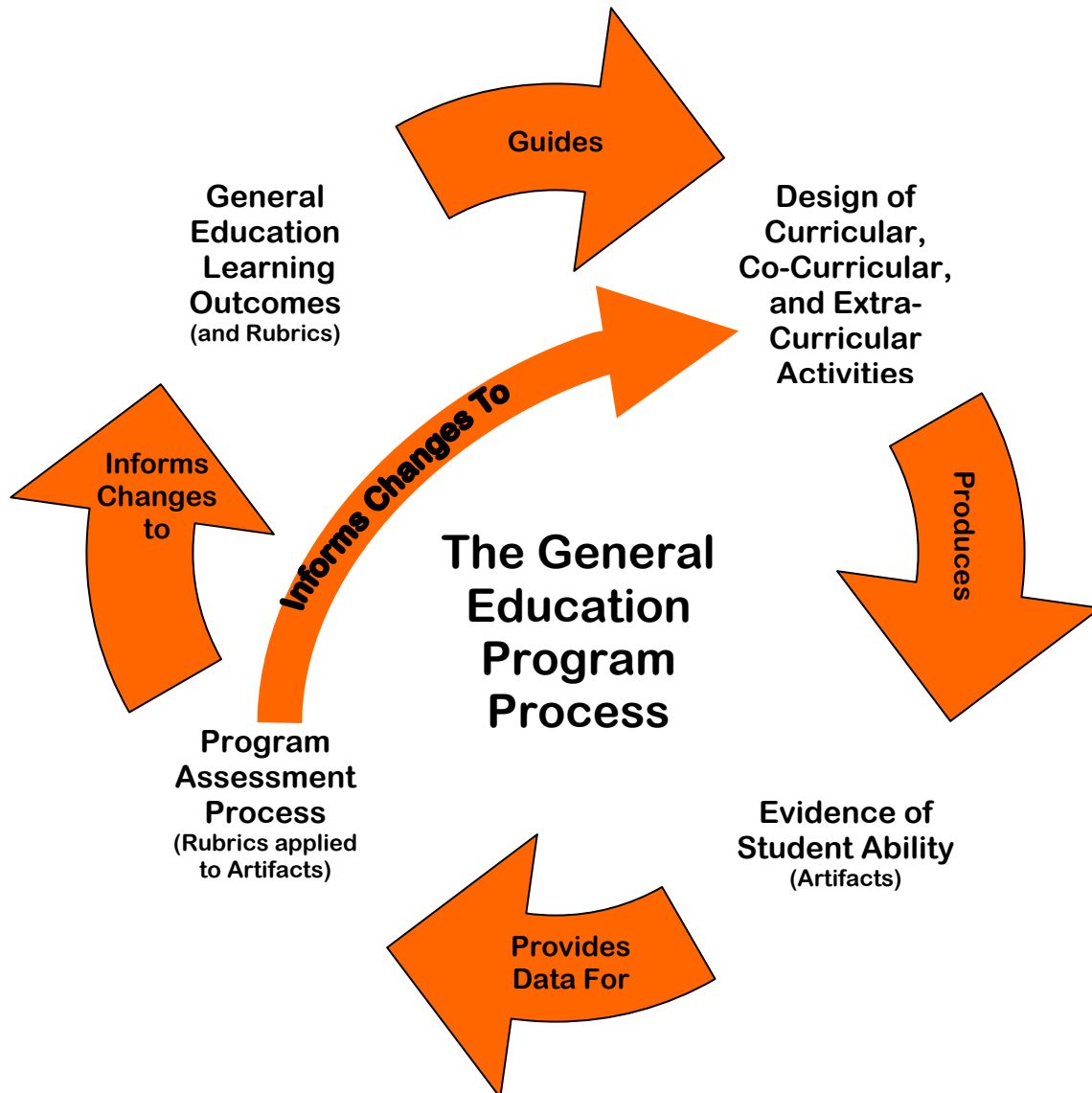
March 30, 2009

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	2
General Education Program Overview.....	3
General Education Learning Outcomes and Rubrics.....	4
General Education Learning Outcomes.....	4
Rubrics .....	4
Curriculum Structure.....	5
General Education Framework Course Descriptions .....	6
1. Transitions Experience (100 level) .....	6
2. Communication Seminar (100 level) .....	6
3. Extra-disciplinary Seminar (200 level).....	6
4. General Education Electives (100, 200, 300, or 400 level).....	6
5. Capstone .....	7
Course Design Considerations.....	7
Student Portfolio Design Considerations.....	7
Evidence of Student Ability: General Education Artifacts.....	8
Minimum Criteria for an Acceptable General Education Artifact .....	8
General Education Artifacts from Courses.....	8
General Education Artifacts from Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities.....	9
Connecting General Education Learning Outcomes, General Education Courses, and Artifact Production....	9
Assessment of General Education.....	11
Governance of the General Education Program.....	11
University General Education Committee .....	11
Institutional Support for General Education .....	12
Appendix: Design Principles Guiding the General Education Program.....	12
Works Cited .....	13

## General Education Program Overview

The objective of the general education program is to cultivate Ohio Northern undergraduate student competencies related to the general education learning outcomes that were approved by the four undergraduate colleges. This program – which encompasses curricular, extra-curricular, and co-curricular activities undertaken by undergraduate students at Ohio Northern University – is best understood as a process designed to cultivate student competencies related to the general education learning outcomes. The general education program process includes these key components: (a) general education learning outcomes; (b) the activities (curricular, extra-curricular and co-curricular) designed to cultivate student competencies related to the general education learning outcomes; (c) evidence of student ability as pertains to the general education learning outcomes (i.e., artifacts); and (d) assessment of the evidence to ascertain how the program might be improved or modified. The process is diagrammed below. Each key component is described in the following sections.



# General Education Learning Outcomes and Rubrics

## General Education Learning Outcomes

The general education learning outcomes specify the competencies that each ONU student is expected to cultivate as a result of their general education experience. The advantages of an outcomes-based program include clarity in defining the intended effects of general education on a student's personal and intellectual development, and flexibility in specifying how students may satisfy the general education requirements.

The general education learning outcomes were developed through a recursive process. The General Education Committee reviewed and revised the outcomes previously developed by the University Steering Committee on General Education. Drafts of the revised outcomes were then conveyed to the curriculum committee, or equivalent, in each undergraduate college. Feedback was incorporated. The general education learning outcomes listed below were approved by all four undergraduate colleges by January 21, 2009.

### General Education Learning Outcomes

Beginning with matriculation and continuing throughout their educational experiences at Ohio Northern University, our students will demonstrate:

1. Effective communication
2. Critical and creative thinking
3. Scientific and quantitative literacy
4. An understanding of diverse cultures and their effects on human interaction
5. Integration of concepts across disciplines
6. Informed and ethical responses to personal, civic, and global needs
7. Informed responses to aesthetics in art or nature

Evidence of attainment of these outcomes will appear in artifacts produced through individual academic work, collaborative academic work, or co-curricular activities.

The general education learning outcomes apply to every undergraduate student at ONU. Additional learning outcomes that guide a student's program of study are a function of the student's choice of college, major, and minor (if selected).

## Rubrics

Students will demonstrate their competencies related to the general education learning outcomes by producing "artifacts." An artifact is a measurable, archival work (see the Evidence of Student Ability: General Education Artifacts section below) that can be linked directly to one or more general education learning outcome. To ensure consistency in evaluating artifacts, a rubric will exist for each learning outcome. Each rubric is under development by a team of faculty representing all of the undergraduate colleges using the "D-Cube" process administered by EduMetry.

The rubrics will be used to evaluate the quality of student artifacts. The rubrics will also provide guidance for individuals who are developing courses and other activities intended to further student competencies related to a particular general education learning outcome. The rubric will also be used to assess the effectiveness of the general education program.

It is anticipated that the rubric construction process, which is now underway, will conclude by April 30, 2009. The completed rubrics will be added to this report as an appendix.

## Curriculum Structure

Student competencies related to the general education learning outcomes will be cultivated through curricular, extra-curricular and co-curricular activities. These activities will be explicitly connected to one or more general education learning outcomes via a “tag.” The “tag” indicates the general education learning outcome(s) emphasized in the course. The “tag(s)” also indicates the course will generate an artifact(s) relevant to the learning outcome. Course “tags” will be included as part of a course’s catalog description. Assignment of general education learning outcome “tags” to a specific course will occur through a process under the responsibility of the University General Education Committee, a university operational committee charged with oversight of ONU’s general education program (see Governance of the General Education Program, below).

The proposed general education course framework is summarized in Table 1 below. Details of each proposed framework component are described in the balance of this proposal document.

TABLE 1  
General Education Course Framework

When Taken	Transitions Experience (College Determined)		Communication Seminar	Extra-Disciplinary Seminar		Elective Courses and Other Work	Capstone (Two Terms; Major Determined)
Seniors/P4/P5/P6						Varies	Fall and/or Spring
Juniors/P3						Varies	Some Students
Sophomores/P2				Fall or Spring		Varies	
Freshmen/P1	Fall semester		Fall or Spring		Some Students	Varies	

## General Education Framework Course Descriptions

The minimum criteria for each course component of the proposed general education framework are outlined below. All courses are to be included within the normal load of the participating faculty member.

### 1. Transitions Experience (100 level)

This course will facilitate the student's transition from high school to college life. In addition, the course will demonstrate ties between general education and the major (or potential major). Other attributes of this course include:

- General education learning outcome addressed (minimum)
  - Critical and Creative thinking
- Developed and delivered by the individual colleges.
- Student can receive credit only once for a transitions experience.

### 2. Communication Seminar (100 level)

This course will begin cultivation of students' communication competencies, with emphasis on written communication. Other attributes of this course include:

- General education learning outcome addressed
  - Effective Communication (emphasis on written communication)
- Mandatory for all undergraduate students during their first year of study.
- Class size restricted to 15 students per section (per recommendations of the Association of Departments of English; [www.ade.org/policy/index.htm](http://www.ade.org/policy/index.htm)).

### 3. Extra-disciplinary Seminar (200 level)

This course will expand a student's experience beyond the major by exploring a "big question" from other perspectives. Rather than a single common course, each instructor will develop a unique course that reflects a common theme. The extra-disciplinary seminar will draw upon the strengths and experience of individual faculty members while providing a common experience for all ONU students. Other attributes of this course include:

- General education objectives addressed by the seminar:
  - Critical and creative thinking
  - One other outcome of the instructor's choice
- Outside the student's major.
- Class size restricted to 15 students per section.
- Engages a 'big question' from various perspectives.
- A broad theme is selected by the General Education Committee such that all seminars reflect that theme in some way.
- Pedagogy must actively engage the students (e.g., project based learning; active learning).
- Prerequisite: the student has successfully completed a transitions experience.

### 4. General Education Electives (100, 200, 300, or 400 level)

Any course that is "tagged" for at least one general education learning outcome is considered part of the general education curriculum. Some of these courses may be required for completion of a major, minor, or special program; while others will be electives chosen by the student to complete the general education

portfolio requirements (see Table 2 below). Faculties teaching these courses are encouraged to utilize a variety of pedagogies.

## 5. Capstone

A senior culminating experience is an identified “high-impact educational practice” (Kuh 2008). Attributes of the capstone experience are as follows:

- General education objectives addressed by the capstone (minimum):
  - Effective communication
  - Critical and creative thinking
- Student engages a substantial project determined by the department/college.
- A minimum of two terms in length. Timing and location of the capstone activities is intended to be flexible. For example, the capstone may begin in spring semester of junior year and conclude in fall semester of senior year or capstone work may commence at an off-campus location during a summer and continue during the regular academic year.
- Encourage (but not require) that the capstone be interdisciplinary where appropriate.
- It is expected that the capstone will satisfy other requirements relevant to a student’s college or major program.

## Course Design Considerations

Curricular and co-curricular activities, both outside and within a student’s chosen field of study, may cultivate student competencies related to the general education objectives. The course design considerations presented in this section apply to design of both “general education” courses – i.e., coursework that is primarily intended to further the student’s development toward general education outcomes – and courses within a field of study that further a student’s general education.

A course intended to produce general education artifacts:

- Must generate at least one, but not more than three, artifacts relating to general education outcomes.
- Must generate a minimum of one artifact, and a maximum of two artifacts, relevant to each “tag” assigned to the course.
- May generate a maximum of one artifact per course credit hour.

## Student Portfolio Design Considerations

Student satisfaction of the general education requirements is evidenced by a portfolio containing artifacts that demonstrate the student’s competencies related to each general education learning outcome. In addition to the minimum artifact requirements (see Table 2), a student’s portfolio must be designed such that:

- Not all of the artifacts for a given outcome may come from a single course.
- A maximum of two artifacts for a given learning outcome may come from a single course.
- A specific artifact may be applied to no more than two general education learning outcomes.
- At least 50% of all artifacts must be generated by course work outside the student’s college (for students in the colleges of Business, Engineering and Pharmacy) or outside the major department (for students in College of Arts & Sciences).
- A maximum of two artifacts may be generated by approved extra- or co-curricular activities.
- Artifacts must come from classes that a student successfully completes with a grade of “D” or better (or accompanied by documentation of satisfactory performance in the case of an extra- or co-curricular activity).

## Evidence of Student Ability: General Education Artifacts

Artifacts provide evidence of student ability related to one or more general education learning outcomes and may take many forms (e.g., student paper, creative project, response on an exam question). However, artifacts must be assessable by the appropriate rubric(s), and must be submitted in a form suitable for storage in the student general education portfolio. Artifacts may result from an assignment specifically designed to promote the general education outcomes, or may also achieve course objectives unrelated to general education. A student has completed the general education program when s/he has accumulated the minimum number of artifacts required for each general education learning outcome as specified in Table 2.

A general education artifact directly links course activity to one (or possibly more) general education learning outcome(s). In this way, the artifacts inform course design in addition to providing evidence of student performance. The general education artifacts will result in a rich database useful for assessing the general education program.

It is important to distinguish the role of artifacts in program assessment from the use of artifacts as a graduation requirement for individual students. As illustrated by Table 2, each student must produce a specified number of artifacts in order to satisfy the general education requirements. However, while the number of artifacts is prescribed, the quality of these artifacts is not. If a student passes a course and generates one or more artifacts that meet the definition provided below, those artifacts count towards satisfaction of the general education requirement, regardless of the quality of work demonstrated.

Since the artifacts generated by a course will be included in the catalog description, a student will be able to identify courses in advance that will generate the necessary number of artifacts. However, this identification process is only possible if the quality of the resulting artifacts is not considered. The alternative would be a set of general education requirements that are no longer tied to the successful completion of courses – which would mean a fundamental change in graduation requirements.

While the quality of artifacts produced by an individual student is not a graduation requirement, meaningful program assessment demands artifacts that accurately represent the abilities of the student. Therefore, it is recommended that the instructor of any course that produces general education artifacts should make failure to submit artifacts or submission of “insignificant” artifacts grounds for failure of the course. In this context, an insignificant artifact does not mean an artifact that is of poor quality, but rather one that does not represent a meaningful effort on the part of the student (e.g. a student turning in a signed blank sheet of paper).

### Minimum Criteria for an Acceptable General Education Artifact

1. The artifact represents student performance on a given general education learning outcome as defined by the capabilities on the corresponding rubric
2. The generating course or other activity must have a “tag” for the specific general education learning outcome for which the artifact provides evidence.
3. The artifact must represent a significant emphasis of the generating course or activity (note: an artifact may, but need not, represent a significant percentage of a course grade).
4. The artifact is suitable for scoring with the appropriate general education learning outcome specific rubric.
5. The artifact represents an individual student’s work or an individual student’s readily identifiable contribution to a group activity.
6. The artifact must exist in a format appropriate for archiving in the artifact repository system (i.e., portfolio) designated by the University Assessment Committee.

### General Education Artifacts from Courses

1. The artifact must meet the minimum criteria for an acceptable artifact (above).

2. The artifact must represent student work that is part of the graded work for the course.

### **General Education Artifacts from Extra-Curricular and Co-Curricular Activities**

1. The artifact must meet the minimum criteria for an acceptable general education artifact (above).
2. The artifact must be pre-approved according to procedures established by the general education committee (i.e., generated by a “tagged” co- or extra-curricular activity).
3. The artifact must be accompanied by documentation of satisfactory performance that is submitted by the advisor/preceptor for the extra- or co-curricular activity.

Exceptions to these criteria may be requested by an individual faculty member. Exemption requests should be directed to the General Education Committee.

## **Connecting General Education Learning Outcomes, General Education Courses, and Artifact Production**

Table 2 (below) illustrates the connection between the general education learning outcomes, the courses in the general education framework, and artifact production. The committee proposes that a student will have completed the general education program when the portfolio contains at least 20 artifacts distributed to meet the minimum number of artifacts indicated for each learning outcome. The General Education Committee, in coordination with the University Assessment Committee, will periodically review the minimum number of artifacts required for each learning outcome and recommend adjustments as appropriate.

When a student receives transfer or transient credit for a course which has a general education learning outcome “tag,” the student will also receive credit for generating the associated artifact(s). Student artifact portfolios will contain only artifacts generated by work at ONU.

TABLE 2

General Education Framework						
General Education Outcome	Transitions First Year Experience (Fall semester 1 <sup>st</sup> year; College designed and delivered)	Communication Seminar (1 <sup>st</sup> year)	Extra-Disciplinary Seminar (Explores a thematic big question)	Elective Courses and Other Work	Senior Capstone (Two Terms College Determined)	Minimum Number of Artifacts***
1. Effective Communication	Varies*	Artifact Produced (writing intensive)	Varies	Varies	Artifact Produced	4 (3 artifacts must evidence written communication; 1 must evidence other forms of communication)
2. Critical and creative thinking	Artifact Produced**		Artifact Produced	Varies	Artifact Produced	4
3. Scientific and quantitative literacy	Varies		Varies	Varies	Varies	2
4. An understanding of diverse cultures and their effects on human interaction	Varies		Varies	Varies	Varies	2
5. Integration of concepts across disciplines	Varies		Varies	Varies	Varies	2
6. Informed and ethical responses to personal, civic, and global needs	Varies		Varies	Varies	Varies	2
7. Informed responses to aesthetics in art or nature	Varies		Varies	Varies	Varies	2
						20 Artifacts Minimum****

\* “Varies” indicates that artifact production is a function of defined course objectives and the general education tag(s) assigned to a course.

\*\* “Artifact produced” indicates that the course must generate an artifact for that learning outcome.

\*\*\* The minimum number of artifacts listed should be revisited once the rubrics are complete.

\*\*\*\* The 20 artifacts minimum includes 18 artifacts specified by the minimum number of artifacts indicated for the seven learning outcomes plus two artifacts that are not pre-specified. The unspecified artifacts may be student electives or specified by a college or major.

## Assessment of General Education

To ensure continuous improvement of the general education program, the committee recommends that the University Assessment Committee develop an assessment regimen for the general education program. This should include, but not be restricted to:

- Specifying how the artifact “portfolio” concept will be implemented.
- Assessing the effectiveness of the general education program in producing suitable artifacts and in accomplishing the general education outcomes.
- Developing a timetable for periodic continuing assessment (e.g., perhaps assess the effective communication and critical and creative thinking learning outcomes at the end of year two after program deployment).
- Developing protocols for communicating assessment results to the University General Education Committee.

## Governance of the General Education Program

A university-wide general education program common to the university, requires a governing entity with authority to administer the program. The committee proposes creation of a University General Education Committee, an operational committee with responsibility for the general education program. The committee proposes that the following bylaw be considered for adoption:

### University General Education Committee

#### 1. Membership

The Director of General Education(chair); three representatives from the College of Arts and Sciences; one representative from the College of Business; one representative from the College of Engineering; one representative from the College of Pharmacy.

#### 2. Selection

The Director of General Education holds faculty rank and is appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs; each college representative is appointed by the Vice President for Academic Affairs following consultation with the Dean of the appropriate college.

#### 3. Area of Responsibility

The Committee is responsible for determining course eligibility for general education learning outcome tags. The Committee, in conjunction with the University Assessment Committee, is responsible for reviewing and recommending changes to the following for review by appropriate bodies through the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs:

- a) the university general education course framework
- b) the university general education learning outcomes
- c) the assessment rubrics associated with these outcomes

#### 4. Administrative Coordinator or Liaison

Director of General Education

## Institutional Support for General Education

Successful implementation of the recommended general education program will require ongoing professional development and support of faculty teaching general education. Course design grants, course-releases, and other forms of faculty support are encouraged. Faculty load should be appropriate for university and college expectations for performance of teaching, scholarship, and service.

At a minimum professional development is needed to assist faculty in their:

- Understanding of the general education program.
- Adaptation to an outcomes based curriculum.
- Creation of artifacts that can be used to assess our outcomes.

The committee recommends that Opening Day 2009 feature professional development activities focused on professional development of faculty in support of the general education program.

Successful implementation of the communication seminar will require a coordinator with faculty status possessing the appropriate academic credentials. A Writing Center, to support student written communication and as a complement to the Communication Skills Center, should be created in the near future.

## Appendix: Design Principles Guiding the General Education Program

The following principles guided development of the proposed general education program:

- *Learning outcome driven.* General education at ONU refers to a set of curricular and other elements that collectively cultivate student competencies related to the general education learning outcomes. The general education learning outcomes define the greatest common factor of an ONU education; they define the “general” in the general education program. Historically, general education has implied a common body of knowledge (i.e., “what an educated person should know”). Reflecting the dynamic nature of knowledge in our global societies, defining ‘fundamental knowledge’ is now an impossible task. Defining a set of fundamental competencies that an educated person should possess is, in contrast, manageable. (See Bok 2006 for an excellent discussion of this point. See also the AAUP’s publication *College Learning for a New Global Century*). The focus on learning outcomes ensures the general education program is designed in a way that avoids disciplinary silos and emphasizes instead furthering student progress toward those outcomes. While the general education learning outcomes are common to all undergraduate programs, the ways in which students develop competencies in those outcomes may vary across programs and individual students.
- *Flexible.* To accommodate the diversity of programs on the ONU campus, and the constraints imposed by those programs, the general education program must be flexible. While the general education learning outcomes define a common set of objectives, there are many ways in which those objectives may be achieved by individual students.
- *Persists the duration of a student’s program.* A student’s general education experiences commences with his/her first semester on campus and may continue throughout that student’s ONU experience up to, and including, the culminating coursework during the final semesters of studies.
- *Encompasses work outside and inside the field of study; including co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.* Student progress toward the general education learning outcomes may be supported by activities both within

and outside the student's major field of study. By reducing the curricular barriers between "major courses" and "general education courses" it is expected that students will develop a greater appreciation for the interconnectedness of knowledge.

- *Relevant.* Many students perceive general education to be of limited relevance to their chosen field of study or their educational goals. To combat this perception, general education should be delivered in a way that connects with student's lives. Programs should design ways to enhance the relevance to students of general education within their program of study, narrowly, and their life, more generally.
- *Artifacts.* Student achievement of the general education learning outcomes should be demonstrated by generating at least two artifacts relevant to the specific learning outcome(s).
- *Fit within institutional context.* The general education program should complement and reinforce the undergraduate programs. A defining feature of numerous programs across campus is that they direct-admit students into the program as freshmen. Following Nichols (2008), general education is construed as a "collaboration and integration of general education and the major."
- *Assessable.* The general education program should be designed to facilitate assessment of the extent to which students are achieving the learning outcomes. Assessment is fundamental to continuous improvement of the general education program.
- *General education courses are included in a faculty member's teaching load.* The committee recognizes there are inconsistencies across campus with regards to handling of freshmen experience and capstone courses. Some programs handle these activities as part of a faculty member's teaching load. Some programs handle these activities out of load (as overload) for the participating faculty. The committee recommends that all general education coursework be included as part of a faculty member's teaching load.

## Works Cited

- "ADE Guidelines for Class Size and Workload for College and University Teachers of English: A Statement of Policy," Association of Departments of English, accessed on 1/11/2009 at [www.ade.org/policy](http://www.ade.org/policy).
- American Association of Colleges and Universities (2007), *College Learning for a New Global Century*, Washington, D.C.: American Association of Colleges and Universities.
- Bok, Derek (2006), *Our Under Achieving Colleges: A Candid Look at How Much Students Learn and Why They Should Be Learning More*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Kuh, George D. (2008), *High Impact Educational Practices: What They Are, Who Has Access to Them, and Why They Matter*, Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities.
- Nichols, John P. (2008), "Liberal Education: A "Both/And" Commitment," paper presented at the 2008 conference of the Association for General and Liberal Studies.  
<http://www.bsu.edu/web/agls/docs/Genedbothand%201.doc>