Connections & Integrations: Creating a Learning Outcomes Framework for SUNY Fredonia
Submitted by the Task Force on Baccalaureate Goals
1 March 2012

Strategic Challenges
Four-year comprehensive colleges like Fredonia find themselves in a vastly changed higher-education landscape, pressed to define their relevancy in complicated ways and for increasingly diverse audiences, including students and their families, employers, accrediting bodies, politicians, and community members. While Fredonia has always been committed to preparing students to be accomplished professionals who are skillful and able to succeed in the world, that world is increasingly interconnected, competitive and fragile. On a number of levels, our region has had difficulty keeping pace with such changes. In addition, our incoming students will bring an increasingly diverse set of expectations, preparations and ambitions. The Task Force has tried to be mindful of the myriad challenges facing us as we've conducted our research. We believe that Fredonia has an opportunity to renew and strengthen its identity, articulate its priorities clearly and partner itself strategically in order to enhance its relevance in delivering a 21st century education for our students. In doing so, we can also redefine our campus as an innovative intellectual and artistic community, a committed partner in economic and community development, a positive model of sustainable practices, and a creative center for cultural diversity.

Defining Opportunities
The development of a community of learning undertakes a holistic approach to students' educational experience: it visibly connects acquisition of specialized knowledge undertaken in academic majors and interdisciplinary programs with a dynamic general education program, linked with innovative opportunities for co-curricular engagement. Establishing such a community of learning will help promote Fredonia's distinctiveness within SUNY and in the nation, while enhancing our students' chances for a successful future, professionally and personally. We seek to provide a transformative education experience for our students, grounded in compelling creative and intellectual inquiry. A Fredonia education integrates acquisition of multiple kinds of knowledge with personal and professional opportunities to help students recognize the richness of diversity, understand what it means to live a sustainable life, value citizenship as global and local and contribute meaningfully to a plurality of communities. We seek to prepare Fredonia graduates who can meet 21st century challenges with confidence and enthusiasm, and who can live fully and well. As we create such a community of learning, we can also become an anchor for renewing our region: a leading institution that fully supports, celebrates and utilizes the diversity of its people, cultures, environment and industry. If we build upon our existing strengths by making thoughtful, visionary choices over the next several years, Fredonia can become a magnet for student learning and a force for positive change in the region and beyond.

Our Process: Coordinating Previous Efforts, Engaging in Research, Establishing Principles
The Task Force's work coordinates multiple campus-wide conversations and initiatives over the past several years, including: general education reform initiatives since 1998; faculty and professional attendance at national meetings 2009-2011 spotlighting new pedagogies in STEM disciplines, general education revision efforts, blended learning and assessment, and conversations initiated in 2010 to create Fredonia's strategic plan for the next several years. Additionally, the Task Force has engaged in significant research of its own since its formation in late September 2011. We have kept abreast of conversations, debates and trends in higher education generally via books, articles, campus forums and national conferences. We have surveyed research specifically focused on learning goals, outcomes-based assessment and curriculum transformation, studying models developed by other campuses across the country, and soliciting feedback from all constituencies on our own campus. From the beginning, the Task Force developed its emerging themes and areas of emphasis through an outcomes-based assessment and planning process. (Our "resources and bibliography" section summarizes our research, which we continue to update: http://www.fredonia.edu/president/baccgoals/goalsdevprocess/bib.asp)

As we articulated our final decisions in establishing a learning outcomes framework, key principles of agreement emerged among us: that knowledge infuses everything that a university does and is thus both implicit in such a framework and beyond any particular goal; that "knowledge" itself is dynamic and diverse; that a framework seeking to connect the wide range of intellectual, professional, and aesthetic programs on our campus requires transparency, creativity and elegance; that a framework seeking to incorporate diversity and sustainability needs to express those broadly and even provocatively; that interconnectedness and integration are crucial for lifelong learning.

As we have indicated in all of our updates to the campus, we put assessment at the beginning of our process, seeking to identify the hallmark of a Fredonia education, using the following strategy:

Development and Alignment of Learning Goals
1. SUNY Fredonia Learning Goals are identified > *2011-2012 Task Force charge*
2. Each division develops or refines a set of learning goals, specific to their area, that align with the institutional goals. (Typical to most campuses, Student Affairs has this level of goals, whereas Academic Affairs frequently does not.)
3. Each department or unit within the division develops or refines their learning goals to align with the division goals.
4. Each course or program within a department or unit develops or refines their learning goals to align with the department or unit's goals.

Thanks to the work of Task Force member Marissa Cope, assistant director of Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment and member of the Campus Assessment Committee, we have thought extensively about possibilities for assessment, utilizing the campus's existing plan and thinking strategically about how to align it with a learning outcomes framework. Those who are interested in these suggestions can access them on the "Assessment" portion of our resources page: http://www.fredonia.edu/president/baccgoals/goalsdevprocess/bib.asp.

Recommendation: Create a Community of Learning
We recommend that the campus undertake the significant challenge over the next five years to reimagine itself as a Community of Learning. This effort will require active collaboration, communication and a coordinated focus across the divisions (Academic Affairs, Student Affairs, Administration and University Advancement); it will also require a renewed understanding of how all of us define our relation to broader communities linking the local to the global. All members of the campus will be tasked with contributing to this effort to rethink how we support each other in equipping students to embrace change and gain confidence in undertaking 21st century challenges. The heart of our community begins with the adoption of **Learning Goals**. The Task Force recommends the adoption of four primary Learning Goals that are interconnected, integrated, and mutually supportive of a Community of Learning at SUNY Fredonia:

SUNY Fredonia will focus its mission to ensure that all Fredonia students, utilizing knowledge developed through a broad range of intellectual experiences, will be:

- **Skilled (develop Intellectual and Applied Skills, Literacies and Knowledges),**
- **Connected (engage Community and Diversity: Local Stewardship, Global Citizenship),**
- **Creative (demonstrate Scholarship, Artistry, and Innovation) and**
- **Responsible (activate Sustainability, Ethics, Leadership and Professionalism).**

We further recommend that the campus work with our professional graphic and web designers to create a suitable visual representation for how these goals work together, capturing the principles we've used to develop them, i.e., integration, interconnectedness, and a dynamic understanding of knowledge and learning. As Tracy Collingwood, director of the Career Development Office observed, the representation needs to demonstrate that these goals reflect intellectual "learning in 3-D."

SKILLED: Develop Intellectual and Applied Skills, Literacies and Knowledges

Effective living requires a multitude of intellectual and applied skills, critical literacies and diverse knowledges, and our research provides the greatest overlap in these areas. Arguably, the point of greatest agreement among educators, employers and alumni in terms of preparing for success in life is the ability to think critically and analytically: to solve problems, make good decisions, consider ethical implications, synthesize and evaluate information, engage in reflective thinking, and make meaning. The network of intellectual and applied skills we recommend for students thus includes:

- The ability to think critically and analytically;
- to listen effectively to others;
- to read across disciplines and cultures;
- to write persuasively and creatively;
- to speak confidently and professionally;
- to work with and evaluate information effectively;
- to utilize technology capably and thoughtfully;
- to develop aesthetic appreciation;
- to understand scientific methods;
- to engage in mathematical problem-solving;
- to think historically.

These foundational skills are complemented by a wide range of critical competencies that extend and expand on the critical skills outlined above: working collaboratively and independently; creating and sharing effective knowledge; understanding the value of different perspectives; developing ethical frameworks; fostering intellectual curiosity; thinking against the grain; translating knowledge to new situations. Without such skills and competencies, students' pathways to success are severely curtailed. Our campus will be tasked to reimagine ways to help students develop these skills and competencies, beyond coursework or single requirements — beyond a simple checklist. We want students to be able to effectively develop, demonstrate and activate their knowledge in these areas, not simply check off a requirement satisfied. This will imply a different mode of advising, of thinking about general education, of thinking about the majors and interdisciplinary programs, and how co-curricular experiences might become a greater dimension of the learning process.

When we link the development of intellectual and applied skills and competencies to critical literacies — media, information, financial, cultural, historical, scientific, aesthetic — we provide a foundation for learning outcomes that the whole campus can support with innovative, integrative partnerships. The Task Force's recommendations rest upon the necessity of rethinking how we incorporate such skills, competencies, and literacies as the basis for increasingly sophisticated levels of students' engagement with the development of diverse knowledges, gained through their specific work in the majors, in cross-disciplinary work, in general education, in field-based and experiential learning, and in student life and activities. Partnering across the campus and with the broader communities of which we are a part to create a seamless integration of effort in support of student learning will help equip our students to meet the challenges and responsibilities they will face in college and beyond. We aim to create a Community of Learning that can sustain, enhance and deepen these efforts over the longer term.

CONNECTED: Engage Community and Diversity: Local Stewardship, Global Citizenship

Our sense of community is a distinctive trait of SUNY Fredonia where we encourage and develop strong connections to each other and to the places in which we live. We conceptualize the idea of community to be very broad, understanding that our local community is nested within a regional and

global community, and recognizing the interdependence of these communities with each other. This can only happen through exposure to diverse conceptions of knowledge and understanding the ways in which these have shaped culture and history. Activation of critical consciousness and learning pave the way for acceptance and celebration of the rich diversity of our communities. Through active engagement within local communities, we become more aware and compassionate global citizens.

Global citizenship includes a sense of belonging to and having responsibility within local, national and global communities; a sense of stewardship for the natural environment; and a recognition of one's civic responsibilities to the local, regional, national and global community. This includes taking responsibility for one's personal life choices and membership in a range of organizations and levels of government from local to global while at the same time engaging in active citizenship by participating in public debate, political decision-making and community actions.

Like every other higher education institution, Fredonia should be a community of learning and intellectual activity in every way. We can project our work to enrich and improve other communities and to let them enrich and improve us (whether these communities are across the street or in a different corner of the world). We want to encourage our students:

- ○ to value and respect different traditions and points of view: Fredonia can prepare students to live and work alongside people with different perspectives and customs utilizing a number of innovative opportunities and technologies;
- ○ to experience the rewards of serving their local communities and developing a sense of local stewardship for the community, its people, and its natural resources;
- ○ to study abroad, to study languages other than English at a high level of competency, and to engage with students and professionals of other cultures interactively. We want students to *experience*, not merely read about, global society, in order to develop a sense of their global citizenship.

We are each a member of a global society that is in continual, dynamic flux. Understanding of, and respect for, the economic, social and biological interdependence of global life is, therefore, a necessity. Such awareness instills that our individual differences are a collective strength, and also encourages the preservation of cultural histories and heritages. The perspectives, life experiences and cultures of others, as well as the transformation of cultural identities and practices, all contribute to understanding and developing sustainable communities.

CREATIVE: Demonstrate Scholarship, Artistry, and Innovation

Students will enjoy greater success if they possess the ability to create, apply and transform knowledge for useful and creative purposes and to keep on learning as conditions and circumstances change. Encouraging students' intellectual curiosity and helping them understand how knowledge is produced across disciplines will allow them greater facility with diverse methodologies and organizational frameworks. Critical thinking, organizational competence and the ability to work creatively with others in collaborative settings are additional strengths we see as crucial for student achievement and both short-term and lifelong success.

Artistic expression, intellectual thinking, and scholarly research are at the heart of Fredonia's academic community: all students benefit from recognizing how such integration can help them achieve their fullest human potential. As students demonstrate academic achievement that links their work in a major to their experiences across the campus and in the community, they develop a deeper sense of their contributions to the professional world and how their acquisition of specific knowledge can spur the innovative uses of that knowledge to inspire change. Creativity and innovation can take many forms: the artist or engineer who brainstorms how to recycle a waste product into something functional; the scientist whose fieldwork catalyzes solutions to social problems; the teacher who designs a pedagogical situation that offers high-schoolers new perspectives. Our community of learning should stimulate students to reach the heights of their chosen fields — equipping them to seek advanced degrees

and/or entry to the professions — and also to contribute creatively to their communities. We encourage strengthening opportunities for students to:

- engage with their peers, faculty and professionals in diverse experiential learning situations, to actualize research, performance and craftsmanship, within their majors and in general education;
- engage with their peers, faculty and professionals to solve problems beyond the scope of one field through exposure to a diverse set of interdisciplinary learning situations;
- engage with their peers, faculty and professionals in co-curricular learning experiences to demonstrate their ability to translate knowledge into everyday situations and contexts.

Innovative strategies for adapting to change are integral aspects of a sustainable, functioning community. In an ever-changing world, an openness to and a comfort level with change is a basic disposition for lifetime success. Our students have lived with substantial changes in technology, for example, and are, to varying degrees, comfortable with it. But will they be as open to what will be the "new" in their adult lives, whether it will be new in terms of technology or in terms of ideas or processes? Will they be able to be (and continue to be) creative, innovative, and show ingenuity in what they do in their lives?

Providing more opportunities for interdisciplinary as well as experiential and co-curricular learning can present students with dynamic spaces to demonstrate their achievements in scholarship, artistry and innovation. Partnering with creative leaders in clinical, professional, educational and business environments can offer additional possibilities for students to demonstrate how their learning contributes to sustainable, vibrant communities.

RESPONSIBLE: Activate Sustainability, Ethics, Leadership, and Professionalism

Developing a sense of meaning, purpose and interconnectedness with the natural world as well as the social environment fosters sustainable thinking. Students should be encouraged to learn to think critically about the world, find ways in which to identify and solve problems given available resources, and be active, engaged citizens of the local-to-global community. This requires each person to understand the dimensions of decisions — both personal and social — and accept responsibility for the consequences of those decisions. Our sense of community and global awareness reminds us that we are all interconnected and interdependent, thus even individual decisions can have a larger impact.

We are committed to helping students recognize different value systems and understand the impact that those values have on people and places, realized through the active engagement within local and global communities. By thoughtfully reflecting on such experiences, we all learn how to recognize the ethical dimensions of our personal decisions, promote their realization on a societal level and accept responsibility for them.

Our students will benefit from a rich and supportive culture on our campus that helps them develop this kind of integrated thinking. We seek opportunities to help students:

- achieve a high level of cultural and global awareness, knowledge and competence;
- recognize, understand, appreciate and sensitively bridge cultural divides;
- develop an awareness of the national and global challenges associated with current economic, political, and social systems;
- learn about and understand the principles upon which sustainable ecosystems and societies are built;
- possess the ability to analyze the complexity of systems when engaged in decision making;
- understand and work with complexity, uncertainty and risk;
- develop ethical decision-making skills;
- engage in co-curricular and experiential learning activities which demonstrate sustainable and responsible practices.

We believe integration of learning along these lines will benefit our students in their chosen professions and develop their potential for leadership. The community of learning we envision fosters development of professional ethics and standards specific to students' field of study. Such thinking can positively influence the future while designing and creating sustainable communities.

Ethical reasoning in action means that students will have the tools needed to help them make ethical decisions in their chosen professions and in living in a challenging, complex world. Co-curricular activities and experiential learning opportunities can foster professionalism and ethics, help students activate knowledge across different situations, build their leadership potential and reinforce the impact graduates can have on their world, starting at Fredonia with the local community.

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Fredonia's Community of Learning thus begins with the adoption of Learning Goals but it does not end there. While the goals are specifically addressed to strengthening student learning, they require that faculty, professionals, staff, administration and community partners also see themselves as active members of the Learning Community. Developing such a culture on campus means rededicating our efforts to be skilled, creative, connected and responsible in the way we work with each other, model intellectual engagement, inhabit our communities, engage with diversity, and contribute to a sustainable future.

Key recommendations for implementation:
Alignment and coordination with the university mission and strategic plan:
- Establish concrete connections between Learning Goals and the *Power of Fredonia* strategic plan [already underway in *Power of Fredonia* revision]
- Integrate the strategic plan categories with the Learning Goals to rethink the university mission statement [important for new administrative members to be included in this process]
- ***Establish a campus-wide strategic plan for how we create a Community of Learning over the next five years — phases and measures that can be accomplished each year by all divisions — reflecting participation by all four campus divisions, students, and community members.***

Recommendations for implementation:
- ***Establish a campus-wide launch of the campus's Community of Learning.***
- ***Establish a coordination team that reports to the president and the campus on implementation, monitoring and assessment of the Learning Goals and the "health" of the Community of Learning on a regular basis: all four divisions, as well as students and the community, should be represented.****
- Support opportunities for students to shape the process of revising/developing expectations for their own learning (examples: advising, residence life conversations, Student Association retreats, student organizations, athletic programs, honor societies, focus groups within departments and units) and insure that students are continually engaged in the conversations that emerge at all levels to build the Community of Learning.
- Create sequenced/scaffolded support for all divisions to collaborate in aligning/developing their own learning outcomes with the Community of Learning (examples: workshops, colloquia, retreats, conferences, conversations). Ensure multiple opportunities for continual reframing over each year of the implementation period and *commitment to sustaining* these efforts over the long term.
- Create a dynamic model for general education (perhaps drawing on the LEAP framework being adopted throughout the country: see http://www.aacu.org/leap/index.cfm).
- Support opportunities for conversations to emerge across divisions to create and implement new learning experiences. Collaboration and connection to others to provide experiences that foster the intended learning are critical to successful implementation.

- Support opportunities for conversations to emerge that continually link the campus with its larger communities (from local to regional to global). Collaboration with and connection to these wider communities forms a crucial element in providing experiences that foster new kinds of learning.
- Establish at least one day each semester for promoting a Community of Learning, demonstrating a visible campus-wide commitment to this effort.

*Possible 5-Year Timeline/Plan:
2012-2013 Year 1: Alignment of Learning Outcomes Framework
and Revision of General Education Program
2013-2014 Year 2: Planning for Enhancement of Curriculum and Co-Curriculum
2014-2015 Year 3: Initial Implementation of Enhanced Curriculum and Co-Curriculum
2015-2016 Year 4: Assessment Planning: How will we know if we are successful?
2016-2017 Year 5: Year 1 of Assessment: How successful have we been so far?

Recommendations for advancing and sustaining our efforts:
- Provide ongoing opportunities for curriculum revision/development, professional development, and community partnering to demonstrate progress toward building a Community of Learning
- Provide ongoing opportunities to foster co-curricular experiences and experiential learning that build on and engage the knowledge acquired in classroom-based learning, and that diversify experiences in general education
- Provide ongoing support for how units/departments can rethink assessment practices to measure their contribution to the Community of Learning (examples: performance reviews, annual reports, tenure/promotion/merit procedures, handbooks, unit priorities, etc)
- Provide opportunities to reimagine how students demonstrate effectiveness of learning (capstones/performances/student teaching/degree projects and co-curricular transcripts >> for example: develop E-portfolios that bring learning in the majors together with learning in general education and co-curricular learning)
- Schedule campus-wide discussions for how the campus as a whole demonstrates support for and success in creating effective strategies for developing a Community of Learning (examples: streamlining budgetary priorities; recruitment strategies for students, faculty, staff, administrators; reward systems for students as well as faculty/professionals/staff; accreditations; advancement initiatives; annual reports)
- Encourage discussion of a parallel conversation within Graduate Studies so that Fredonia's graduate programs, so clearly grounded in engaged scholarship and active partnership with the community, will be a vibrant and visible component of the Community of Learning (Graduate Council)
- Plan broad discussions exploring how the campus can establish a more visible partnership with the wider communities of Fredonia and Dunkirk, Chautauqua County and far beyond (examples: streamlining budgetary priorities; recruitment strategies for students, faculty, staff, administrators; curriculum/co-curricular development; reward systems for students as well as faculty/professionals/staff; accreditations; advancement initiatives; annual reports; campus/community events, international partnerships)
- Sponsor broad discussions with community leaders (civic, business, creative, intellectual) to establish a partnership plan to regularly review progress in creating/strengthening connections with the Community of Learning on campus and to maintain focused, regular dialogue (e.g., create annual event)

Glossary of key terms:

Baccalaureate Goals: specific undergraduate goals that shape every student's educational aspirations, regardless of academic major. "Learning Goals" and baccalaureate goals are interchangeable terms. Such goals foster an intentional coordination of academic knowledge, student engagement in multiple high-impact practices, opportunities for students to demonstrate effective uses of knowledge, opportunities for civic growth, respect for and understanding of diversity, and professional growth and responsibility.

Co-Curricular Experiences: Simply put, these are experiences that take place elsewhere than in traditional classrooms, for example, in student affairs environments from residence halls to student organizations. Although definitions differ widely, general agreement exists on the strategic importance of collaboration and partnership between academic and student affairs professionals to ensure connections to learning outcomes. To give just one example, Vanderbilt University defines co-curricular learning as "formal and informal learning that occurs outside of the classroom. Two critical characteristics that distinguish co-curricular learning from other forms of extra-curricular engagement and participation are the:
- Intentional connection to learning outcomes and personal and professional development, and
- Integration of a self-reflective learning process that considers the holistic nature of growth and development" [see http://www.vanderbilt.edu/sia/ccle/ccle-mission.php]

Field-based and Experiential Learning: learning situations that provide students with opportunities to demonstrate knowledge acquired in classrooms through experiences beyond the classroom, for example: student teaching, professional clinic practica, internships, tutoring, study abroad, service learning, artistic/theatrical/musical performances/exhibitions/recitals, literary and media productions, science fieldwork, civic engagement experiences....just to name the most obvious

High Impact Practices (HIPs): Intentional, purposeful pedagogies seeking to encourage students to make connections across their learning situations, for example: first-year seminars and experiences; common intellectual opportunities; learning communities; writing-intensive coursework; undergraduate research opportunities; collaborative assignments and projects; diversity/global learning opportunities; service learning/community-based learning; internships; capstone courses and projects [from AAC&U]

Learning Outcomes Framework: the development of an umbrella-like framework bringing together the campus's expectations for student learning that happens in academic programs, in general education coursework, in field-based experiences (e.g., student teaching, study abroad, science and clinic fieldwork, internships) and experiential learning situations (e.g., artistic productions, service learning, civic engagement), and in co-curricular experiences (e.g., living-learning communities in residential life; athletic programs; student media; student organizations). Establishment of such a framework requires setting goals, agreement on designing multiple opportunities for student achievement, agreement on designing appropriate assessment measures, using the assessments to improve teaching and learning.

Demonstration of student learning: new technologies that can help

See a recent discussion evaluating the ways in which electronic portfolios can help measure student achievement in learning outcomes: "Measuring Student Progress with E-Portfolios" by J. Elizabeth Clark and Bret Eynon in the latest "Peer Review" of AAC&U: http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/pr-fa11wi12/MeasuringStudent.cfm

A more specific discussion of portfolios for general education, with models and rubrics: "Electronic Portfolios and Student Success" by Helen L. Chen and Tracy Penny Light [click on 'view file' after you click on the link below]:
http://leap.aacu.org/toolkit/learning-outcomes-assessment/2011/eportfolios-and-student-success

E-portfolios have been in use in discipline-specific environments: for example, language acquisition portfolios such as LinguaFolio have been successfully incorporated throughout the European Union and increasingly adopted in US institutions: http://www.ncssfl.org/LinguaFolio/index.php?linguafolio_index

Research and Bibliography: the <u>full range of resources</u> utilized by the Task Force as it conducted its work is available on our website and we are adding items continually; http://www.fredonia.edu/president/baccgoals/goalsdevprocess/bib.asp.
see also our 'research' page under 'goals development process': http://www.fredonia.edu/president/baccgoals/goalsdevprocess/research.asp

Specific resources available from the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U):

Brownell, Jayne E. and Lynn E Swaner. 2010. *Five High-Impact Practices: Research on Learning Outcomes, Completion and Quality.*

Gaston, Paul. 2010. *General Education & Liberal Learning: Principles of Effective Practice.*

Gaston, Paul and Jerry G. Gaff. 2009. *Revising General Education—And Avoiding the Potholes.*

Leskes, Andrea and Ross Miller. 2006. *Purposeful Pathways: Helping Students Achieve Key Learning Outcomes.*

Rhodes, Terrel L. 2010. *Assessing Outcomes and Improving Achievement: Tips and Tools for Using Rubrics.*

Schoenberg, Robert. 2005, *General Education and Student Transfer: Fostering Intentionality and Coherence in State Systems.*

Project Kaleidoscope: What Works in Facilitating Interdisciplinary Learning in Science and Mathematics: Summary Report. 2011.

The LEAP Vision for Learning: Outcomes, Practices, Impact and Employers' Views. 2011.

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