

BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMITTEE ON GENERAL EDUCATION

The Goals and Objectives of the BCC General Education Program

PREFACE

The concept of general education is a modern expression of an ancient idea: the idea of the well-educated, and therefore cultured and liberated, person, in touch with the realities of human existence, both past and present. A general education is what all truly educated people have (and ought to have) in common. As such, general education is opposed to excessive academic "individualism" and "overspecialization," to the fragmentation of the learning process via "disciplinism" and "departmentalism." General education stresses common or shared learning, the communal-social rather than the private-individualistic aspects of the general educational enterprise. (Cronk, 1983, 13)

Bergen Community College recognizes that a general education is composed of two inextricably related components: (1) a set of processes that involves the gathering, interpretation, and presentation of knowledge and (2) a body of knowledge that is common to all well-educated individuals. Although some courses will focus on process activities (e.g., English Composition I and II and Speech Communication) and other courses will focus on presenting a discrete body of knowledge (e.g., courses in the Natural Sciences, Mathematics, the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and Wellness and Exercise Science), there is a fundamental interaction between the process and content levels of education, which is evident throughout the general education program at Bergen Community College.

Therefore, with the help of their general education courses, students will develop process skills (e.g., critical thinking, effective writing and oral communication, and research techniques) and will become familiar with discrete bodies of knowledge from the Humanities, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Social Sciences, and Wellness and Exercise Science. Students will develop an understanding of the basic themes in each of these areas through course-specific applications of process skills. The aim of all general education courses is to take students beyond the acquisition of course-specific knowledge and beyond the immediate application of learning and to provide an enduring foundation of basic general knowledge on which they can build (Hirsch, *passim*).

The goals and objectives of the general education program at Bergen Community College have been developed with reference to the college's mission statement. In particular, the following points from the mission statement are reflected in the general education goals:

1. To develop in students a desire for lifelong learning.
2. To provide students with the motivation, knowledge, and skills necessary for continued and independent living.
3. To improve the reading, speaking, writing, mathematical, and interpersonal skills of students.
4. To assist students in clarifying their personal values and their philosophies of life.
5. To assist students in thinking critically about current events and issues and in acquiring an adequate understanding of society and its institutions.
6. To develop in students an understanding and appreciation of the histories and cultures of both western and non-western societies.
7. To assist students in acquiring the attitudes and skills necessary to apply systematic, critical, and discriminating thought to the solution of problems.
8. To provide a general education program calculated to equip students with a broad academic and cultural background and to enable them to think and communicate effectively.

General education programs have been criticized for requiring students to take widely varied groups of courses that appear to have little or no connection to one another.

It appears that there is little or no effort to synthesize and integrate within and across courses and disciplines in the general education program. The general education courses are too often taught as a simplified introduction to a discipline rather than as courses that are part of a program providing a liberal arts foundation (Luckenbill and McCabe, 18).

Bergen Community College recognizes the importance of synthesizing and integrating the information and processes taught in its general education courses. This concern for integration is an integral part of the program and is reflected simultaneously on two separate levels:

1. The content and process components of a general education are largely inseparable, and courses will systematically present both levels of knowledge, and

2. The content of a general education includes overlapping bodies of knowledge that may be presented in a variety of courses with a variety of foci and a variety of emphases. Students and faculty will endeavor to recognize and understand the significance of these overlapping substantive areas.

The general education goals and objectives that appear on the following pages assume that students will demonstrate the knowledge of content and processes at a level that is at or higher than a minimal competency level. Some students may not achieve competency in all areas, but the college will determine a level of minimal overall competency that is necessary for the fulfillment of general education requirements. It is expected that most students will exceed these minimal levels in all or most of the components of a general education.

Nevertheless, colleges do not create a final product; they are way stations on the road from life's beginning to its conclusion. College general education programs assist students in the development of skills and knowledge that will aid them in their life's journey. There is no finality to the tasks that are engaged in by college students; they are tasks that were started before entering college and that will be continued throughout the remainder of the individual's life. Thus, the following goals and objectives are steps in a learning process that is a lifetime activity. As a result of an effective general education program, students should demonstrate growth in each of the goal areas designated in the following pages.

GOAL 1: COMMUNICATION

STUDENTS WILL COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY IN BOTH SPEECH AND WRITING.

1.1. OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze, comprehend, and evaluate what they read, hear, and see.

1.2. OBJECTIVE

Students will state and evaluate the views and findings of others.

1.3. OBJECTIVE

Students will write and speak clearly and effectively in standard American English.

1.4. OBJECTIVE

Students will logically and persuasively state and support in speech and in writing their points of view or findings.

1.5. OBJECTIVE

Students will evaluate, revise, and edit their communications.

GOAL 2: CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, AND INFORMATION PROCESSING

STUDENTS WILL USE CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS IN ANALYZING INFORMATION GATHERED THROUGH DIFFERENT MEDIA AND FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES.

2.1. OBJECTIVE

Students will identify a problem and analyze it in terms of its significant parts and in terms of the information needed to solve it.

2.2. OBJECTIVE

Students will select and use appropriate sources of information in a variety of formats.

2.3. OBJECTIVE

Students will evaluate information on the basis of its origin, viewpoint, relevance, accuracy, and completeness.

2.4. OBJECTIVE

Students will recognize weaknesses in arguments such as the use of false or disputable premises, suppression of contrary evidence, faulty reasoning, and emotional loading.

2.5. OBJECTIVE

Students will formulate and evaluate possible solutions to problems, and they will defend the solutions they choose to implement.

2.6. OBJECTIVE

Students will use computers and other electronic tools to access, analyze, and present information.

GOAL 3: ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE

STUDENTS WILL RECOGNIZE, ANALYZE, AND ASSESS ETHICAL ISSUES AND SITUATIONS.

3.1. OBJECTIVE

Students will identify the ethical implications of an issue or a situation.

3.2. OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of differing perspectives on an ethical issue or situation.

3.3. OBJECTIVE

Students will take a position on an ethical issue or situation and defend it with logical arguments.

GOAL 4: QUANTITATIVE SKILLS

STUDENTS WILL APPLY APPROPRIATE MATHEMATICAL AND STATISTICAL CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONS TO INTERPRET DATA AND TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.

4.1 OBJECTIVE

Students will translate quantifiable problems into mathematical terms and solve these problems using mathematical or statistical operations.

4.2 OBJECTIVE

Students will construct graphs and charts, interpret them, and draw appropriate conclusions.

GOAL 5: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF SCIENCE AND WILL BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH SCIENCE FROM OTHER FIELDS OF STUDY. STUDENTS WILL APPLY THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF INQUIRY TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS BASED ON VERIFIABLE EVIDENCE; USE SCIENTIFIC THEORIES AND KNOWLEDGE TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURAL WORLD; AND EXPLAIN THE IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC THEORIES, DISCOVERIES, AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES ON SOCIETY.

5.1 OBJECTIVE

Students will define science and describe its limitations.

5.2 OBJECTIVE

Using the scientific method and standard laboratory procedures, students will analyze a problem and draw conclusions from data.

5.3 OBJECTIVE

Students will distinguish between scientific theory and scientific discovery and between science and its technological application, and will explain the impact of science and technology on society.

GOAL 6: SOCIETY & HUMAN BEHAVIOR

STUDENTS WILL USE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE THEORIES AND CONCEPTS TO ANALYZE HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.

6.1 OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze and discuss behavioral or societal issues using theories and concepts from a social or behavioral science.

6.2 OBJECTIVE

Students will explain how social institutions and organizations influence individual behavior and how individual behavior influences social institutions and organizations.

6.3 OBJECTIVE

Students will describe how social and behavioral scientists gather and analyze data and draw conclusions.

GOAL 7: AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVE

STUDENTS WILL ANALYZE AND EVALUATE WORKS OF THE LITERARY, VISUAL, OR PERFORMING ARTS.¹

7.1 OBJECTIVE

Students will describe commonly used approaches and criteria for analyzing a work of art.

7.2 OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze works of art using commonly used approaches and criteria.

¹For this goal, the 7.1 Objective deals with the "how-to" process for analyzing a work in the literary, visual, or performing arts, while the 7.2 Objective involves students in the actual analyzing of particular works of art. In effect, students will use the analytical approaches studied/learned in 7.1 for achieving the 7.2 Objective.

GOAL 8: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

STUDENTS WILL ANALYZE HISTORICAL EVENTS AND MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN AND/OR NON-WESTERN SOCIETIES AND ASSESS THEIR SUBSEQUENT SIGNIFICANCE.

8.1 OBJECTIVE

Students will state the causes of a major historical event and analyze the impact of that event on a nation or civilization.

8.2 OBJECTIVE

Students will discuss a major idea, movement, invention, or discovery and explain how it affected the world or American society.

8.3 OBJECTIVE

Students will show how various interpretations of historical events are influenced by their time, class, culture, and perspective.

GOAL 9: DIVERSITY & GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

STUDENTS WILL ANALYZE THE IMPLICATIONS OF COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES AMONG CULTURALLY DIVERSE PEOPLES.

9.1. OBJECTIVE

Students will link cultural practices and perspectives with the geographical and/or historical conditions from which they arose.

9.2 OBJECTIVE

Students will explain why an understanding of differences in people's backgrounds is particularly important to American society.

9.3 OBJECTIVE

Students will recognize and explain the consequences of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions.

9.4 OBJECTIVE

Students will recognize the needs and concerns common to culturally diverse peoples.

9.5 OBJECTIVE

Students will recognize contributions made by people from various nations and cultures.

GOAL 10: HEALTH & WELL-BEING

STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE HOW TO USE THE CONCEPTS OF OPTIMUM HEALTH AND FITNESS TO IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN THEIR WELL-BEING.

10.1 OBJECTIVE

Students will identify risk factors in lifestyle health issues (e.g., infections, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis) and describe how changing behavior can minimize these risk factors.

10.2 OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze an exercise mode relative to its effect on physical and mental well-being.

10.3 OBJECTIVE

Students will create a model of a personal plan for alternative ways of using discretionary time that contributes to their well-being.

10.4 OBJECTIVE

Students will analyze selected methods that can be used as a personal plan for stress management.

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