

## Core Revitalization and Assessment - Executive Summary May 4, 2009

The Core Revitalization and Assessment Committee make the following major recommendations (further details are given in the detailed recommendation section):

1. UAF should adopt the AACU Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) Essential Learning Outcomes as the new major learning outcomes from a new hybrid Core curriculum. The LEAP outcomes are as follows (<http://www.aacu.org/leap/vision.cfm> Accessed April 20, 2009; specific additional UAF outcome recommendations are noted parenthetically):

Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World – through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages and the arts – focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring;

Intellectual and Practical Skills, including inquiry and analysis, critical and creative thinking, written and oral communication (including the current upper division oral and writing intensive requirement), quantitative literacy, information (and technology) literacy, teamwork and problem solving – practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects and standards of performance;

Personal and Social Responsibility, including civic knowledge and engagement – local and global (including globalization, sustainability, knowledge of Alaska and Alaskan issues, and the current *understanding of global economic interdependence* Core curriculum component), intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, and foundations and skills for lifelong learning – anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges;

Integrative and Applied Learning, including synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies – demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems (through, in part, first-year courses).

Adoption of these outcomes has several advantages. First, the outcomes have been well developed by scholars across the nation, and many institutions and state systems, e.g., Oregon, are adopting these outcomes. Second, LEAP provides guidance on educational practices to achieve the Essential Learning Outcomes, and there is a great deal of current work underway on how to assess student learning of these outcomes (see VALUE - Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education, <http://www.aacu.org/value/> accessed April 20, 2009). Third, the

LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes include modern expectations such as integrative and applied learning, civic knowledge and engagement at both local and global levels, skills for lifelong learning and teamwork. Fourth, much of UAF's current Core curriculum will carry over into a new hybrid Core based on the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes.

2. UAF should implement a simple effective assessment of the new hybrid Core using multiple tools (e.g., survey and course embedded learning assessment) and have a clear assessment oversight process.
  - a. The National Survey of Student Engagement and the Community College Survey of Student Engagement have already been implemented at UAF and should continue to be administered on a regular periodic basis as indirect measures of student learning in the new hybrid Core.
  - b. Three common approaches to directly measure student learning are assessment at the course, program, or institutional level. UAF currently uses course assessment to determine how well students have learned intended outcomes associated with specific Core curriculum courses. Program-level assessment embeds assessment within Core courses but summarizes results for the Core, as a whole. Institutional-level assessment embeds assessment in upper division courses in the majors. Because UAF's Core curriculum is the foundation for AA and AS students, institutional assessment is not likely to work well for our purposes. The committee recommends that UAF establish objectives for the LEAP major learning outcomes described above and adopt a program level assessment process. Because students are more likely to do their best if assessment processes also have course grade and completion consequences, the committee generally supports a course embedded process. However, the focus of the embedded assessment should be on the new hybrid Core learning objectives not an assessment of an individual course as it is now.