

**Student Learning Committee (SLC)**  
Minutes from Meeting on October 4, 2011

**Committee members present:** Kendrick Brown (Chair), Nancy Bostrom, Cheryl Browne, Adrienne Christiansen, Terri Fishel, Chad Higdon-Topaz, Jim Hoppe, Kimerly Miller, Libby Shoop, Yang Yu

**Absent:** Lisa Landreman, Peter Mathison,

**I. General business**

- There will be no SLC meeting on October 18.
- SLC members approved the minutes from previous meetings. All minutes through September 27 are approved and will be sent to the Archivist. In addition, minutes will eventually be posted on the Assessment Office website.

**II. Review notes and general impressions from conversations about initial draft**

SLC members expressed appreciation for feedback from the Macalester community. Feedback was obtained through conversations in Town Hall meetings; suggestions posted publicly on moodle or google docs; and suggestions sent via personal email. Special thanks to Neil Chudgar from the English Department for carefully reviewing the entire document, raising important questions, and making specific suggestions for better wording. Neil offered to proofread our final document.

As a group, SLC reviewed the general impressions and notes outlined in the October 4, 2011 agenda.

**III. Identify points to address in revising the draft**

SLC reviewed points raised in the agenda, discussed some in more detail, and brought forth a few additional items for consideration. While several items were discussed, no decisions have been made as to whether and how these questions will be addressed in the statement. The conversation will continue at the next meeting.

- Do we strike the right balance between telling people they don't have to "fit in" and encouraging people to support the goals and outcomes expressed in the statement?
  - We want to respect the diversity of approaches to student learning, and the document is not intended to place restrictions on faculty. On the other hand, do we strike the right balance between telling people they don't have to "fit in" and challenging them to find a way to relate to the document?
- Does the document create the false impression that only the Student Affairs division is responsible for the co-curricular? Faculty members also offer co-curricular learning opportunities.

- We could do a better job of framing the co-curricular.
- The question of our language requirement was raised by a few individuals, but is not included in the agenda. SLC wants to capture the major components of an education at Macalester. To what degree should graduation requirements explicitly connect to the statement? For example, should the “second language” requirement be mentioned in the intercultural competency section? Should we be more explicit about how our Quantitative Thinking requirement fits with the document?
  - Faculty have shown a commitment to these requirements, we should make more explicit connections to graduation requirements in the document.
  - Note that if requirements change, SLC will need to reflect these changes in the statement. The statement is intended to be a living document. It will be informed by what is happening in the curriculum and co-curriculum.
- SLC has received feedback that there is not necessarily enough “reflection” time on campus—students are so busy, little time is left for reflection.
  - We may not necessarily know when reflection is taking place. For example, many faculty members use moodle for reflection or are assigning reflection papers. If reflection is not happening as much as we’d like, it should not preclude us from including it in the statement as something we strongly encourage students to do.
- A few questions were raised about whether the document should better reflect the distinctiveness of Macalester and whether it should be used for marketing.
  - Everything about Macalester cannot be distinct. It’s OK to be similar to highly selective liberal arts colleges on some level—most will share learning goals around communication, critical thinking, etc. But we do differentiate ourselves in what we offer to students—our unique fusion, or the constellation of elements, that comprise an education at Macalester. Considering the language used by our peers, on the surface the opportunities we offer in terms of service, for example, may be similar. But the opportunities we provide allow students to connect with service on a daily basis, and that’s different from the opportunities available at many of our peer institutions.
  - This document is not intended as a marketing tool. It is intended for internal planning purposes. Departments such as admissions may use the information in their own planning, but the entire document is not meant for public consumption.
- The term “discipline” may be too tightly focused. Some faculty members recommended the word “field” as an alternative.
  - This seems reasonable, but how do we accommodate the idea of “interdisciplinary” work? What term would we use as a substitute? Bioinformatics, for example, is interdisciplinary. If we switch to “field,” what would we call this? Sphere of inquiry?

Whatever we use must be inclusive enough to accommodate “regional” understandings to which people can relate.

- SLC members asked for further detail about the tone of the town hall discussions. In general, faculty members, staff, students and alumni were engaged in the discussions and offered constructive feedback; no one suggested that we “scrap” the statement.
  - Some faculty members want assurance that the statement will be inclusive and not restrictive to learning at Macalester. Some expressed concern about a faculty/staff committee having too much input into the curriculum, and would like assurance that the statement won’t be used to control curriculum.
    - It may be outside of SLC’s responsibilities to address this concern. Perhaps it could be addressed through an introduction from President Rosenberg?
  - Some alumni and students indicated (and no one disagreed) that the statement describes a Macalester education.
- SLC will revise the draft to address major concerns, and then plans to circulate the revised document by the end of October. The timeline is flexible, but we’re working within this framework:

Circulate revised draft to campus community:	End of October
Second round of community feedback:	Early November (longer if necessary)
Bring to Faculty and Student Affairs Leadership Team (SALT) for endorsement:	November or February

***Action Item: Kendrick will begin to revise the draft and will circulate to SLC on Friday. He will incorporate Neil Chudgar’s suggestions for better word selection. Track changes will be used to identify completed edits and points for further discussion.***