

Student Learning Committee (SLC)
Minutes from Meeting on December 6, 2011

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

Absent: Peter Mathison

I. General business and updates

Minutes from previous meetings are approved.

Next semester, SLC meetings will take place on Mondays at 3:30 PM, beginning on January 23.

II. Remaining work for this semester

Kendrick designated remaining questions as either “Decisions” or “Issues.” Text designated as a “Decision” will be discussed as a group next semester. Kendrick will draft new text for those areas designated as an “Issue.” SLC will discuss the proposed language during second semester.

III. Review feedback and suggestions for the initial draft

SLC confirmed approval of the revisions for Learning Goal D: Intercultural Knowledge and Competence. The remainder of the meeting focused on revisions for Goal E: Consider the Ethical Implications of Intellectual, Personal and Social Choices. Highlights are included here, but for specific edits, see the revised draft.

- LO#3: “Articulate” and “defend” are two different skills and should both be included in this outcome. In addition to articulating a stance, one should be able to rationalize that stance in the face of opposition, without compromising one’s ethics. On the other hand, one should not “defend to the death.” Adding the phrase “while understanding its limits...” should help to clarify this point.
- The Civic Engagement Center suggested adding a reference to “humility and compromise.” The new “understanding its limits” may help with this, and SLC may consider addressing these issues in the section on student expectations.
- LO#4: “Determine how to act when encountering an ethical dilemma.” SLC revisited the purpose for this outcome and goal, which is grounded in a particular section of the Statement of Purpose and Belief:

...Finally, students should be prepared to take responsibility for their personal, social, and intellectual choices. We believe that the benefit of the educational experience at Macalester is the development of individuals who make informed judgments and

interpretations of the broader world around them and choose actions or beliefs for which they are willing to be held accountable....

This led to several comments and suggestions for the goal and outcomes:

- Do we want students to accept responsibility for their beliefs? This could be difficult or even misunderstood in relation to religious beliefs. And how do we assess the act of taking responsibility for one's beliefs?
- The Statement of Purpose and Belief is explicit about students taking responsibility, but does not specify actions in the face of ethical dilemmas. On the other hand, it's important to address ethical dilemmas because it shows that students have developed the cognitive complexity to make informed decisions.
- Students should also understand the effects their actions have on others. This may be addressed under Goal F, outcome 4.
- Students should be able to take a well-reasoned ethical stance. They should know how to make a decision. For example, there are sometimes conflicts between personal freedom and the rights of the community. Students should accept responsibility for their decisions in cases like these.
- Students should at least acknowledge that there will be implications for the decisions they make and should take responsibility for their actions. Some implications may be easy to foresee. Other implications might be more difficult to anticipate. Students should develop the habit of mind to consider the ethical implications of their actions or inactions. We can assess whether students think through the possible implications resulting from their decisions.
- The title of the goal should be changed to better match the Statement of Purpose and Belief, and to better match the revised outcome wording.

Action Item: Kendrick will revise the draft and circulate to SLC before our next meeting. Track changes will be used to identify points for further discussion. Before next week's discussion, please review Goal E, especially learning outcome 4. We will begin with a final review of this goal before moving on to Goal F: Engage Community.