

**Student Learning Committee (SLC)**  
Minutes from Meeting on March 5, 2012

**Committee members present:** Kendrick Brown (Chair), Nancy Bostrom, Cheryl Browne, Terri Fishel , Jim Hoppe, Lisa Landreman, Peter Mathison , Libby Shoop, Yang Yu.

**Absent:** Adrienne Christiansen, Kimerly Miller, Harry Waters, Jr.

## I. Updates

This is the last meeting before spring break. The committee plans to send the revised draft to Macalester faculty and staff next week.

***Action Item: Kendrick will send revisions by mid week. Please review and send comments directly to him by Wednesday the 14th. Note the text highlighted in red—these are sections intended to frame the document and address questions raised by faculty and staff.***

## II. Review feedback and suggestions for the initial draft

SLC continued its discussion of the section on “Students’ Responsibilities for Learning.”

- SLC reviewed the purpose for this section. The statement on student learning identifies student learning outcomes that we expect all Macalester graduates to achieve. The student responsibilities section is intended to make students aware of their own responsibility for learning, and to highlight characteristics that will help students get the most of their educational experiences.
- As the committee considered this section, several observations were made:
  - The whole document is about what students should be able to demonstrate, and there appears to be much overlap between this section and language in our learning outcomes. This creates confusion because it may appear that we’re adding another section of learning outcomes onto the end.
    - Adding to the confusion may be the fact that we’re advising students to develop these skills while they are at Macalester. If we are helping students to develop these specific skills, then shouldn’t they be learning and/or developmental outcomes?
    - Some of the items, such as “commitment to the common good” may be more of a value than a characteristic.
    - Is there a way to turn “civil discourse” into an attribute? Perhaps “openness.”
  - The text in the student responsibilities section appears to privilege one way of knowing over another. That’s problematic. For example, “skepticism” is important,

but it is only one of multiple ways of knowing. Reflection can help with self-awareness, but students also need to reflect upon content. SLC must also address the larger question of which attributes are chosen for this section, and how they are portrayed.

- Including a list like this might invite suggestions for additional characteristics, like “listening” for example. On the other hand, if we don’t include “skepticism” the natural sciences may take offense.
- If we identify particular characteristics and also define them, will our meaning become too narrow? On the other hand, students need context. If we don’t provide context and definitions, how will they know what we mean?
  - It’s helpful to have specific terms. The terms should trigger self-reflection in students, faculty and staff.
- In this section, is it important for Macalester to distinguish itself from other liberal arts colleges? The consensus appeared to be that the combination of values stated earlier in the document are what make Macalester unique, but that these learning characteristics would be similar to those at other colleges.
  - Should there be an explicit connection between College values and student responsibilities?
- SLC wants to communicate that education doesn’t “happen” to students; students must engage and make the most out of their learning opportunities at Macalester.
  - What’s the best way to impart these qualities without turning them into Learning Outcomes?
- The consensus was that this section should be grounded in research and literature on student learning, for example:
  - Learning Reconsidered
  - Greater Expectations
  - Liberal Learning

The research will provide the rationale for why particular characteristics have been included in the document. SLC will add a general statement at the beginning of the document, with details in the Student Responsibilities section. SLC should be clear that the goal isn’t to measure students in relation to these characteristics. These characteristics and examples are intended to explicitly guide students toward actions and attitudes that will help them make the most of their learning opportunities.

***Action Item: Kendrick will revise the draft and circulate to SLC before our next meeting. Track changes will be used to identity points for further discussion. SLC members are asked to review the document and provide feedback before Wednesday, March 14.***