

# **University Student Learning Objectives (USLOs)**

## **Task Force – Fall 2015 - Spring 2016**

### **Executive Summary:**

This document presents the work and recommendations of the University Student Learning Objectives Task Force. After providing descriptions of the task force membership, charge, and source documents, this report provides a narrative of our USLO revision process and then presents the final draft of the proposed USLOs. It should be noted that these are university-level learning objectives, which, by the terms of our charge, must be applicable to all colleges, departments, and programs: undergraduate, graduate, and law. Furthermore, although the Task Force endeavored to formulate learning objectives that are measurable, university-level SLOs are not designed to be directly measurable. Rather, these objectives serve to guide all colleges, departments, and programs in composing more precise objectives that can be measured and assessed.

### **Members:**

David Cleveland (Law), Elizabeth Gingerich (Business), Timothy Jenkins (Dean of Students), Nezamuddin (Engineering), Jonathan Schoer (Chemistry), Kimberly Smith (Athletics), Tim Tomasik (Foreign Languages & Literatures), Karl Uhrig (English), Edward Upton (Christ College), Theresa Kessler – Chair (Nursing & Health Professions)

### **Our Charge:**

“The task force is charged to review and revise the university learning outcomes with the goal of (a) shortening the list, (b) being consistent with the national dialog about higher education, (c) assuring appropriateness for a 21st century education and (d) affirming that they align with our mission as we prepare students to lead and to serve. Thus, in addition to critical thinking skills, the ULOs should address leadership and service, the integration of liberal and professional studies, and vocation. The task force should also anticipate that the university will continue to attract student populations that are more diverse than currently: there will be more transfer students, more international students, more non-traditional students, and more domestic minority students.

The university-level learning objectives should be broad enough in scope to be applicable to the undergraduate program, the graduate program, and the Law School program. In turn, each of these units, in collaboration with student affairs, athletics, and academic support services, shall interpret the university learning objectives so that they lead to measurable program and course outcomes and encompass curricular and co-curricular activities.”

## **Documents/Sources Used in Our Deliberations:**

Valpo - Mission Statement: “Valparaiso University, a community of learning dedicated to excellence and grounded in the Lutheran tradition of scholarship, freedom, and faith, prepares students to lead and serve in both church and society.”

Valpo – Vision Statement: “Valparaiso University will be renowned worldwide for preparing women and men who are highly sought for their knowledge, character, integrity, and wisdom.”

### **Current University-Wide Student Learning Objectives**

“Through the following student learning objectives, Valparaiso University affirmed its mission-based commitment to educate responsible global citizens who are ready to lead and serve church and society.

The Committee on Assessment built the university-wide student learning objectives from the Mission Statement, the Strategic Plan, the work of the General Education Committee, and the assessment plans of all the colleges, departments, and programs.

These objectives are designed to help colleges and departments clearly link their student learning objectives to those of the university. All academic units will indicate how the learning outcomes of their curriculum and of individual courses within that curriculum link to some, or all, of the university-wide student learning objectives. The objectives are designed to include the cognitive, skill, and value domains of learning.

1. Students will demonstrate skill in various methods of acquiring knowledge in the humanities, social and natural sciences, quantitative reasoning, and the creative arts.
2. Students will master and demonstrate content knowledge by using methods such as inference, generalization, and application.
3. Students will become active learners by finding, analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating information.
4. Students will demonstrate the ability to build logical and persuasive arguments, cases, reports, and/or responses.
5. Students will communicate clearly and effectively in both oral and written forms.
6. Students will achieve a basic level of technological adeptness, appropriate to their field(s) of study.
7. Students will interact and collaborate effectively in groups and teams.
8. Students will explore the relationship between faith and learning.
9. Students will practice the virtues of empathy, honesty, and justice in their academic endeavors.

10. Students will appreciate that diversity in areas such as culture, gender, race, sexual orientation, and religion is pertinent to functioning successfully in a global community.”

The LEAP Challenge (from AAC&U)--Education for a World of Unscripted Problems – describes the role of a liberal education to prepare students to “understand and manage complexity, diversity, and change” whereby students gain a broad and in-depth knowledge in a specific area. Students develop transferable skills which include communication, evidence-based reasoning, and problem solving and proficiencies in their particular field of study. Knowledge and skills are applied in real-world settings.

The Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP) from the Lumina Foundation. Designed as a practical tool for meaningful change on college campuses, the DQP provides guidelines for developing learning outcomes for college students in undergraduate and graduate programs. Foundations – the student is the primary reference, performance is needed for each outcome--emphasize the degree and not just the field of study, what each graduate “out to know and be able to do”, the use of active verbs, and qualitative sets of learning outcomes that are developed by faculty and staff. *The DQP identifies 5 learning categories: specialized knowledge, broad and integrative knowledge, intellectual skills, applied and collaborative learning, and civic and global learning.*

Consulted with Jen Gregory (Director of Instructional Design) and Byron Martin (Director of Multicultural Programs)

National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment, a Primer on the Transformation of Higher Education in America, by Michael Gassis a senior fellow at AAC&U. Charges for how to stay abreast of the changing paradigms and transformations in education.

Career Readiness for the New College Graduate – A definition and competencies from the National Association of Colleges and Employers. A practical guide to key competencies – critical thinking, communication, teamwork/collaboration, information technology, leadership, professionalism/work ethic, and career management.

Preparing Students for the Workforce – from the education advisory board. Outlines six co-curricular opportunities for experiential learning.

VITAL – Guidelines for preparing objectives: university, program, course, and unit levels

University Strategic Plan.

Student Affairs Assessments. Provided by the Student Affairs Deans and Directors. Methods and tools for assessing student learning outcomes. Examples include assessments from residential life, first-year students and commuter students, fraternities and sororities, and leadership programs like LEADValpo. In addition, the Student Health Center collects data about meeting university learning outcomes.

The Criteria for Accreditation and Core Components. Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Access to our peer institutions learning objectives (Chair).

## **Revision Process**

Beginning in September of 2015, the committee members met to first review the current USLOs and the committee's charge. Categories were identified within the existing SLOs and subgroups were assigned accordingly. Each subgroup refined the current objectives in light of the aforementioned supporting documents and brought this work to the full task force. Following this early subgroup work, the full task force continued to refine the work. The draft for university review was completed in December. The committee then presented the draft to the following standing committees and key constituencies:

- EPC
- Committee on Assessment
- Student Affairs
- Library Faculty
- Jen Gregory (Instructional Design)
- Byron Nelson (Director of Multicultural Programs)
- Student Senate
- Curriculum Committees: A & S, Business, Engineering, CONHP
- General Education Committee
- Law School
- University Council
- Council of Deans
- Athletic Senior Staff

In later task force meetings, feedback from all of these committees and constituencies was evaluated and the USLOs were subsequently modified to their current form.

As a result of this work, the committee recommends the following university-wide learning objectives be adopted.

## **Proposed University Student Learning Objectives**

In congruence with its mission and vision statements, strategic plan, and deeply-rooted Lutheran heritage, Valparaiso University is committed to develop in all of its students a full range of human capabilities necessary to ethically and competently lead and serve throughout their lifetimes.

As the University maintains a firm and thorough commitment to assessing student learning, it reviews and when appropriate modifies its student learning objectives to establish a more uniform framework of leadership and academic expectations applicable to its colleges, departments, and programs. This process is achieved with the understanding that each university unit will further refine such broad-based objectives to uniquely reflect its own goals in a measurable fashion.

Students will:

1. Demonstrate theoretical and practical knowledge as well as the intellectual skills and creative capacities pertinent to their respective fields of study.
2. Solve both conceptual and applied problems by integrating broad-based knowledge, evidence-based reasoning, and information literacy.
3. Practice experiential, interdisciplinary, and collaborative learning in both academic and co-curricular pursuits.
4. Communicate effectively in oral, written, and digital forms in increasingly complex contexts.
5. Engage in cross-cultural dialogue and experiences with the requisite knowledge to succeed in a diverse, global community.
6. Develop character, integrity, and wisdom as they discern their vocations and prepare to ethically lead and serve church and society.