

**Ad Hoc Working Group for General Education:
Report and Recommendations**

Ad Hoc Working Group Members:

Carol Bonilla-Bowman, Karen Booth, Emma Rainforth, Valerie Scott, Bob Sproul, Jim Woodley

Initial Draft: July 3, 2009

Latest Draft: August 3, 2009

Appendix I updated 9/15/09 with 2009-10 data

Table of Contents

	Page #
Introduction	2
Key Questions	2
What Have We Already Done in the Way of Gen Ed Assessment?	2-3
The Need for a New Gen Ed Structure	3
GECCo (<u>G</u> eneral <u>E</u> ducation <u>C</u> urriculum <u>C</u> ouncil)–A New Organizational Structure	3-5
Additional Recommendations	6
Future Directions	6
References and Further Resources	7
Appendix 1: Ramapo College General Education Program	8-10
Appendix 2: Learning Goals and Outcomes	11-12
Appendix 3: Gen Ed Pilot Assessment (Spring 2008)	13
Appendix 4: Preliminary Map of Gen Ed Learning Goals Addressed in Gen Ed Categories	14
Appendix 5: Proposed Steps and Timelines for Gen Ed Assessment Process for 2009/2010	15
Appendix 6: Vignettes about “High Impact Practices”	16-17
Appendix 7: Experiential Learning / Civic Engagement	18
Addendum: Revisions to the Gen Ed Institute Working Group Report and Recommendations	19

Introduction

“All silver that sits on a shelf tarnishes; it needs to be taken down and polished now and then.”

Ann Ferren, June 1, 2009

The Ramapo College Gen Ed Institute Working Group began its work at the AAC&U General Education Institute (Minneapolis, May 29 – June 2, 2009) with one thought: it is time to take the College’s valued Gen Ed program (Appendix 1) down from the shelf and give it a polish. Our basis was not that the Gen Ed program is problematic or in need of revision; rather, we believe it is important to create a mechanism for evaluating how effectively Ramapo’s Gen Ed program is achieving our College’s “Learning Goals and Outcomes” (Appendix 2). We agreed that this decision-making process must be bottom-up and transparent from its onset, with input from the entire Ramapo community.

We are suggesting the creation of a group that will represent faculty (and others) in discussing and examining tools and methodologies for accomplishing the assessment of Gen Ed.

There is a feeling that the process must be as personal and collegial as humanly possible, bringing people on board through our good will, passion, and commitment to making things better for everyone.

To bring closure to this introduction, we would like to acknowledge, up front, that this document is almost wholly the product of those who were part of the Gen Ed Institute Working Group. A handful of revisions have been made (by the current Ad Hoc Working Group) to the report and recommendations produced by the Gen Ed Working Institute Working Group. All revisions made are explained in the “Addendum” given at the end of this document. But, the main thrust and most of the details of the original Gen Ed Institute Working Group report and recommendations have been preserved.

Key Questions

Is Gen Ed doing what we want it to do for faculty and students? What are we expecting the Gen Ed curriculum to contribute to the knowledge, skills and abilities of Ramapo graduates? Do students understand what Gen Ed contributes to their educational experience at Ramapo College? To answer these questions, pilot testing has provided some preliminary data, but a complete review is in order. External pressures exist, but that is not our primary focus.

What Have We Already Done in the Way of Gen Ed Assessment?

In Fall 2007, a Gen Ed Task Force was convened by VP Martha Ecker, comprised principally of representatives from the Course Categories and Schools as well as ARC. A pilot assessment was undertaken in Spring 2008 using select courses in several of the categories, and the results were compiled by VP Ecker (Appendix 3). Two examples will be discussed.

Social Issues (SOSC 101). In Fall 2007 the Social Issues Convening Group began looking at ways to assess whether all the sections were producing consistent positive outcomes. A pre/post test was developed and implemented in Spring 2008, which indicated that some revision was called for. The Convening Group agreed on course outcomes to be addressed on exams and in papers, ongoing evaluation of pre/post tests, a mentoring program for new Social Issues faculty, a mandated syllabus template, and the development of a manual with all of the resources that Social Issues faculty have found valuable over time. All Social Issues faculty were involved in all steps of this process.

Science with Experiential Component: Sections of Introduction to Biology (BIOL 101), World of Chemistry (CHEM 101), Introduction to Environmental Science (ENSC 103) and Introduction to Geology (101). Faculty in these courses chose to assess three of the objectives from the LGO report, including the ‘science’ knowledge and skills goals. In the interest of time and simplicity, a multiple choice assessment tool was developed and implemented in these pilot courses at the end of semester – in most cases, either embedded in or as an add-on to the final exam. The results of the assessment, at face value, indicated that the students in these courses failed to achieve the stated outcomes. However, it is clear to the faculty in these pilot courses that the assessment tool was not appropriate – the questions asked need substantial revision because they were too content-specific (even though only *concepts* and *skills* were being assessed). Faculty went back to the drawing board and redefined outcomes for Gen Ed Science, consistent with the LGO and ARC Gen Ed reports, and are working on new assessment tools.

The Need for a New Gen Ed Structure

With Dr. Ecker leaving her VP position in 2008, systematic Gen Ed Assessment appears to have slowed (and perhaps stalled). The Gen Ed Task Force seems to have dissipated. Whereas program assessment is housed within a Program, Ramapo’s General Education curriculum is managed within ARC but has no central home within the Faculty. The coordination of Gen Ed assessment and program review is a large task, likely beyond ARC’s resources (which is why a Task Force was set up in 2007). We therefore suggest an organizational structure is required, comparable to that of a Convening Group, and reporting to an administrator in much the same way a Convening Group does. The Gen Ed Program as an all-school curriculum deserves a permanent structure, just like any other academic program.

GECCo (General Education Curriculum Council) – A New Organizational Structure

If GECCo is formed as suggested in this report, GECCo will function as a cross-school (all-college) group, similar to a convening group in function and reporting. It will serve as the curricular home of the General Education Program and provide a holistic framework for managing the program. GECCo will be less ephemeral than a Task Force or Committee. It will support on-going assessment of Gen Ed and advocate for implementation (“closing the loop”) of Gen Ed ideas and needs as they emerge from the faculty and students. The GECCo concept assumes that the College values General Education and sees it as crucial to the delivery of the educational mission of the College.

In order to offer a general education curriculum that addresses the ever-changing needs of our students, we need to consider both the educational content of the courses and the overall administrative context, as well as the strategic directions of the institution. GECCo will proactively help address issues related to academic content (e.g. learning goals, teaching and assessment methods, vision of education, etc.) as well as administrative aspects associated with curriculum delivery (e.g. frequency of course offerings, identified budgetary obstacles, enrollment distribution in courses, technology infrastructure and support).

While most educational decisions that relate to a specific major can be made by a small group of faculty, decisions related to Gen Ed involve the entire faculty and cannot be implemented without broad administrative support. To be effective as a Council, GECCo will work very closely with the existing organizational structure and people responsible for decision-making (conveners, Deans, VPs, the Provost, and the President). More details about the suggested objectives and responsibilities of GECCo are given below:

GECCo Objectives and Responsibilities:

- GECCo will facilitate the management and improvement of the Gen Ed program.
- GECCo will co-ordinate and support the assessment of and need fulfillment for the 10 Gen Ed Categories.
- GECCo will undertake the synthesis of Gen Ed Assessment as an entire program, including the sharing of information and ideas between Gen Ed Categories.
- GECCo will facilitate the integration of each Category's Outcomes into the courses for that Category.
- GECCo will work in conjunction with ARC to review existing and proposed Gen Ed courses for compliance with the outcomes of the pertinent Gen Ed Category. GECCo approval of Gen Ed courses is required prior to submission to ARC.
- GECCo will ensure a transparent process of Gen Ed assessment and help promote the value of Gen Ed LGOs to the campus community.
 - WEAVEOnline will provide a central repository of assessment data and reports
 - Moodle will be used to facilitate discussion and collaboration.

To provide further detail about how GECCo can help manage the Gen Ed assessment process, recommended steps and a timeline for Gen Ed assessment in the academic year 2009 / 2010 are given in Appendices 4-5.

GECCo Membership and the Roles of Different Members:

- One representative for each of the 10 Gen Ed categories
 - The ‘Category reps’ will coordinate faculty in each of their categories to develop outcomes for the goals that apply to those Categories, and to develop and/or select assessment instruments for those Categories.
- One representative from ARC
 - The ARC rep will liaise between ARC and GECCo. Any proposed curricular changes would go through ARC, just as they do for other Programs.

Ex-officio members

- Vice Provost for Curriculum and Assessment
 - The VCPA will ...
 - advocate for the Program in much the same way as a Dean advocates for a Convening Group. However, the Gen Ed Program is cross-school, and the VPCA is school-neutral. Additionally, the VPCA will provide and co-ordinate resources for assessment and planning.
 - procure funding for on-going training of faculty (including adjuncts) on assessment methods and tools, and/or training on curriculum design.
 - proactively organize and procure funding for activities that stimulate campus-wide discussion on liberal education. These activities may range from student forums to team-building events that help sustain the enthusiasm for a holistic approach to student learning.
 - liaise with administrative units, including Institutional Research and Enrollment Management, and facilitate the collation of assessment data in a central location (WEAVEOnline)
- Director of the Instructional Design Center
 - provide pedagogic support for individual faculty members and to improve the Gen Ed curriculum, as part of “closing the loop” efforts that follow assessment.
- One or more Student Representatives
 - The Student rep(s) will initially conduct focus groups about the Categories and the Goals. The Student rep(s) will provide a needed student perspective about the General Education Program.
- Cahill Center Representative
 - Cahill Center provides opportunities for experiential learning (which is embedded within all courses) and civic engagement
- Advisement Representative
 - Advisement is the first stop for incoming students and also provides navigational aids throughout a student’s career

Service on GECCo would serve an important purpose, given the role of Gen Ed in delivering on the promise to our students of a liberal arts education, and it would require a substantial investment of time from all members. It should be highly valued for personnel reviews (reappointment, tenure, promotion).

Additional Recommendations

- Institute a moratorium on new Gen Ed courses until learning outcomes for each Category have been determined.
- ‘Scaffold’ Gen Ed courses so that freshmen & sophomores are required to take their 100 & 200 level courses before the upper-level Gen Ed courses; students are then better prepared for not just Gen Ed, but also for other 300 & 400 level courses.
 - e.g. College English and Social Issues as prereqs to the 200/300 level Gen Ed courses
 - programs consider using Gen Ed prereqs to better integrate Gen Ed with the majors
 - all WI courses must have ENGL 180 as a prereq.
- Post learning goals prominently in all classrooms and hallways. (IUPUI does this to good effect.)

Future Directions

The Ramapo College Gen Ed Institute Working Group ends its work at the Institute by setting in motion processes to carefully examine and, where necessary, polish our valued Gen Ed program before putting it “back on the shelf” for a while. We believe we are creating a mechanism for evaluating how effectively Ramapo’s Gen Ed program is achieving our College’s “Learning Goals and Outcomes” (Appendix 1). In the meantime, we can dream of things we’ve been exposed to here at the 2009 AAC&U Institute on General Education:

- If GE 100, 200, 300, 400 level courses are taken at specific times in their college experience, might this be the 1st step toward a greater dream... *learning communities*?
- Further to the above, begin creating thematic learning communities
- Increase the level of civic engagement across all schools and curricula (Appendix 7)
- Emphasize continued movement away from teaching and toward learning across all disciplines.
- In the Admissions process, have applying students write an essay articulating the Ramapo pillars and related learning goals and why they wish to attend a liberal arts institution with this mission.
- Create more student evaluation tools which have qualitative components and assign staff to read and assess the essays.

In closing, we would like to thank the Institute for inspiring concrete plans and passionate dreams for the future of General Education at Ramapo College of NJ!

References and Further Resources

- New Leadership for Student Learning and Accountability - http://www.aacu.org/About/statements/documents/New_Leadership_Statement.pdf

This document suggests a proactive stance for higher education in taking responsibility for setting ambitious learning goals, fostering consistent high levels of learning, collecting evidence to monitor achievement of goals, and communicating clearly about the whole process to all stakeholders.

- College Learning for the New Global Century - http://www.aacu.org/advocacy/leap/documents/GlobalCentury_final.pdf

A report from the Liberal Education and Americas Promise (LEAP) National Leadership Council that identifies the essential aims, learning outcomes, and guiding principles for a 21st century college education.

- Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain - <http://carnegiefoundation.org/dynamic/publications/mapping-terrain.pdf>

A paper on creating opportunities for students to connect their learning into a more coherent whole.

- Our Students' Best Work (2008 Revision) - <http://www.aacu.org/publications/pdfs/StudentsBestreport.pdf>

This statement, framed and approved by the AAC&U Board of Directors, updates an earlier 2004 statement and is designed to help campuses respond to calls for greater accountability in ways that strengthen as well as document the quality of student learning in college. The statement calls for a focus on a broad set of learning outcomes essential for global citizenship and success in today's volatile and competitive workplace.

- Levels of Assessment: From the Student to the Institution / Ross Miller and Andrea Leskes - <http://www.aacu.org/pdf/LevelsOfAssessment.pdf>

A short guide that presents ideas about how five levels of assessment can be used on campuses. Included are questions for each level of assessment that can guide understanding and planning.

Appendix 1: Ramapo College General Education Program

General Education: About the Program

Situating students in a critical context is paramount if they are to grasp the complex nature of social, political and psychological issues in the twenty-first century. Without adequate grounding in the liberal arts, students cannot develop the abstract thinking skills to grapple with issues like the problematic nature of economic growth and development, cultural studies and the arts, the contemporary nature of the nation-state, the relevance of the human genome project for the development of drug therapies, the impact of laboratory information systems in chemistry, and the changing hegemony of psychological theories.

Both the College and the larger social context have been altered during the past two decades. The nature of technology, the organization of the economy (locally, nationally and globally) and academic discourse (to name just a few examples) have been transformed during this period. These changes are reflected in the general education curriculum.

All students are obligated to fulfill a basic program in General Education. The courses in the program are distributed throughout the four years of study.

The list below shows the distribution of the required General Education Core courses and categories. Courses which fulfill the General Education categories are listed each semester on the web for students.

GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS (10 COURSES)	
<i>FIRST YEAR</i>	
100 LEVEL One Course	INTD 101 First-Year Seminar (FYS) (Also AIID 101 and CNTP 101) Designed especially for first-year students, First-Year Seminar (FYS) provides a comprehensive introduction to college-level learning. FYS courses are developed around an academic theme or topic based on the expertise of each course instructor, providing students with the opportunity to select a seminar that best suits their interests. FYS encourages new students to participate in a community of learners, to strengthen their critical thinking skills, and to communicate effectively both orally and in writing.
100 LEVEL One Course	ENGL 180 College English The objective of this course is to strengthen students' critical reading and writing. The course will include writing a research paper and developing information literacy. Students will participate in revising, peer critiquing, and faculty-student conferences.
100 LEVEL One Course	SOSC 101 Social Issues The objective of this course is to provide a forum for the historical, academic and personal exploration of race, class, ethnicity and gender and the ways these categories can benefit or oppress college students and American Society. It will cultivate in-depth conceptual approaches to these key areas.

	OR
	<p>BADM 115 Perspectives in Business and Society The objective of this course is to explore modern American business. The course will examine the evolution of our economic system from historical, political, sociological, economic, and cultural perspectives, and will discuss current issues that involve industry within a changing social framework.</p>
100 LEVEL One Course	<p>History Category The courses in this category develop an appreciation of change over time, and the often complex forces that have shaped the past. Students gain an understanding not just of content, but of historical process and method as well. Courses which meet this requirement are: HIST 101 Introduction to US History I HIST 102 Introduction to US History II HIST 105 Western Studies I HIST 106 Western Studies II HIST 109 World Civilization I HIST 110 World Civilization II</p>
100 LEVEL One Course	<p>Mathematical Reasoning Category The courses in this category develop a student's mathematical reasoning skills including formulating and solving problems, thinking critically, and reasoning abstractly.</p>
100 LEVEL One Course	<p>Science with Experiential Component Category This category contains 100-level science that provide a significant experiential component, which could be a lab or fieldwork. Students in these courses will create and analyze data.</p>

SECOND YEAR	
200 LEVEL One Course	<p>AIID 201 Readings in the Humanities This course is an introduction to major texts by authors who have produced distinctive statements about the human experience. The common core of readings will include selections from the Bible, Greek literature and philosophy, Shakespearean literature, and modern literature. The course will enhance students' appreciation of the ways historical and philosophical narratives, fiction, poetry, and drama have helped enrich our understanding of human experience through extensive reading and reflective and analytical writing.</p>

SECOND-THIRD YEAR	
200-300 LEVEL One Course	<p>Intercultural North America Category Students will gain an understanding of different cultures and the relationships among cultures and peoples within North America (i.e., the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the Caribbean.) Students will reflect upon and analyze texts and products which illustrate the symbolic nature of culture and the exchange of meaning. Courses will examine cultural and artistic productions,</p>

	everyday life, material culture, and other manifestations of culture, as well as how these are linked to heritages and peoples beyond North American boundaries.
200-300 LEVEL One Course	<p>International Issues Category</p> <p>The objective of courses in this category is to provide a context through which students learn to interpret and critically analyze recent world events, focusing on the coordination of economic, cultural, social, and political activities. Courses will examine the increasing interconnectedness of nations and peoples throughout the 20th and 21st centuries.</p>
200-300 LEVEL One Course	<p>Topics Category courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • address subject matter in historical context. • feature readings and/or other “texts,” including film and visual arts, where appropriate. <p>This requirement will be fulfilled by taking one Topics Category course outside of the student's major:</p> <p>For arts/humanities majors - Topics: Social Science For business majors - Topics: Arts and Humanities OR Topics: Social Science</p> <p>For science majors - Topics: Arts and Humanities OR Topics: Social Science</p> <p>For social science majors - Topics: Arts and Humanities</p> <p>Topics: Arts and Humanities Category Courses in this category introduce students to the methods of inquiry in the arts and humanities through the critical examination of works (texts, artworks, artifacts, performances, films, media, etc.). This category includes courses which provide the social, cultural, and historical contexts of the field of inquiry.</p> <p>Topics: Social Sciences Category These courses provide students with a scientific understanding of the social forces which shape human experience and society over time. Students apply theories and methods to the study of human and social development, group behavior, and the resolution of collective conflicts.</p>

Writing Intensive Requirement

Four writing intensive courses are required. College English, Readings in the Humanities, and two other courses. These two courses will consist of any 200/300 level Writing Intensive course, and a Disciplinary or Interdisciplinary capstone course.

Appendix 2: Learning Goals and Outcomes

Report of the LGO Task Force, Summer 2007.

All Goals except 'In-depth knowledge' should be addressed within the Gen Ed program. The LEAP goals can be extracted from these goals.

MISSION PILLARS

Goal: Interdisciplinary Analysis

Students will be able to:

- Evaluate, integrate and apply disparate sorts of knowledge.
- Create and employ innovative, interdisciplinary approaches to identify, comprehend, and address contemporary problems.

Goal: Experiential Learning

Students will be able to:

- Identify how prior content and concepts have been applied to their experiences and how their experiences will enhance future academic study and personal, professional, and civic development.
- Reflect on their experiences individually and collectively by challenging assumptions and hypotheses about their beliefs, outcomes of their decisions, and actions they have taken, and by sharing their insights.
- Understand and articulate the structure, relationships between, and impacts of the multiple communities and organizations with which they interact.

Goal: Intercultural / International Perspective

Students will be able to:

- Understand and negotiate the complexity and diversity of cultures in their various contexts (local, national and global).
- Recognize the importance of communicating orally and in writing in more than one language.
- Comprehend the causes and consequences of the disparity in the global distribution of power and resources.

SKILLS

Goal: Critical Inquiry

Students will be able to:

- Think and engage analytically.
- Assess theoretical arguments, data and other evidence.
- Read, analyze and understand written, oral and visual works of art from across the arts and humanities, and from across a range of historical periods and cultures.
- Evaluate scientific evidence and the scientific arguments generated from it.
- Develop competence in quantitative reasoning and in the application of arithmetical, algebraic, geometric and statistical methods in solving problems.
- Recognize that taking risks in academic enquiry fosters creativity and innovation.
- Develop a historical perspective that includes the ability to place events in the context of time and place and acknowledges that historical interpretation is influenced by social, economic, political, and ideological considerations.

Goal: Communication

Students will be able to:

- Present coherent written and oral arguments with correct grammar and syntax.
- Apply computer technology to depict concepts and data visually.
- Access needed information effectively and efficiently
- Evaluate information and its sources critically, and incorporate primary and secondary sources into essays, reports and other forms of communication.
- Recognize the economic, legal, social and ethical issues surrounding the use of information.

KNOWLEDGE

Goal: In-Depth Knowledge

Students will be able to:

- Demonstrate proficiency and depth of knowledge in their major field of study

Goal: Understanding of the World in Which We Live

Students will be able to:

- Understand the basic fundamentals of scientific methods that are used to comprehend and explain natural phenomena, and be aware of the place of science knowledge in contemporary culture and history.
- Study and analyze social phenomena.
- Recognize the properties and importance of a healthy environment, and the benefits of environmentally sustainable practices.

VALUES AND RESPONSIBILITY

Goal: Awareness

Students will be able to:

- Become more aware of their own individual values and ideals, and to think and reflect on the moral and civic dimension of issues, problems and matters of individual and public concern.
- Appreciate the perspectives of others on issues of individual and public concern.

Goal: Engagement

Students will be able to:

- Act and communicate critically about issues, problems and matters of public consequence.

Use both political and non-political processes to promote community well-being

Appendix 3: Gen Ed Pilot Assessment (Spring 2008)

In the Spring of 2008, pilot assessment was done in a variety of general education courses. The matrix (below) indicates the courses piloted and the goals for which one or more objectives were assessed. Summary prepared by Martha Ecker Summer 2008. As indicated in the Report (page 2), assessment instruments varied, and in some cases the resulting data indicated more about the assessment methodology than student learning – which is as to be expected from a pilot.

Student Learning Goals	History II	Readings In the Humanities	Social Issues	Science*	Elementary Probability and Statistics	First Year Seminar
Critical Thinking	X		X	X		X
Communication		X	X			X
Information Literacy	X	X	X			X
In-Depth Knowledge						
Understanding of the Natural World				X	X	
Civic Engagement			X			X
Interdisciplinary Analysis		X	X			X
Experiential Learning			X			X
Intercultural/International Perspective	X		X			X

*sections of Introduction to Biology, Introduction to Geology, Introduction to Environmental Science, World of Chemistry.

Appendix 4: Preliminary Map of Where Gen Ed Learning Goals are Addressed in Gen Ed Categories

It is assumed that the Learning Goals and Outcomes Task Force Report (Appendix 2) is adopted. To that end, this matrix provides the Working Group's initial attempt to map Goals to Gen Ed categories (Appendix 1).

Gen Ed Categories→ Learning Goals*	First Year Seminar	College English	Social Issues/Persp. B&S	History	Mathematical Reasoning	Science With Experiential	Readings in the Humanities	Intercultural North America	International Issues	Topics in AH / SS
Interdisciplinary	X		X				X			
Experiential	X		X			X				
Intercultural / International			X	X				X	X	
Critical Inquiry	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
Communication	X	X	X				X			
Understanding of the World in Which We Live			X	X	X	X		X	X	X
Awareness	X		X							
Engagement			X							
<i>Number of courses^</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>68</i>	<i>132</i>	<i>101</i>

* The goals and categories identified here are explained in further detail in Appendices 1-2.

^ This is the number of courses in each Gen Ed category as of June 2, 2009

Appendix 5: Proposed Steps and Timelines for the Gen Ed Assessment Process in 2009/2010

If approved by Faculty Assembly, faculty from each Gen Ed Category ('Category Working Groups') will work on steps 5-10. Each Category Working Group would then be led by their Category rep from GECCo.

Step	Timeline	How the Gen Ed Curriculum Council (GECCo) Can Support 2009 / 2010 Gen Ed Assessment Efforts (steps 5 through 10, below)
1. Present GECCo to campus community: - ARC, FAEC, Dean's Council - Faculty Assembly	Summer 2009 and Fall in-service	- Members of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Gen Ed will pick up where the Gen Institute Working Group left off, to finish up with introducing GECCo to the campus community
2. Initial presentation to faculty at in-service	09/01/09	- Members of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Gen Ed will do this presentation
3. Map LGO goals into Gen Ed categories (refinement of Appendix 4)	09/30/09 meeting ¹	- Members of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Gen Ed will organize and run this meeting for the entire faculty, with assistance from Eddie Saiff
4. Identify initial possible members of GECCo	After 09/30/09	- Members of the Ad Hoc Working Group for Gen Ed will coordinate this
5. Specify outcomes for each LGO item identified for each Category in Gen Ed	Begin on 9/30/09, with faculty in different categories continuing through fall	- GECCo will help to coordinate the dissemination of options and models for specifying outcomes, and related training - GECCo will take responsibility for managing the assessment process of those goals not receiving sufficient attention from those in the individual Gen Ed categories
6. Instrument(s) Development	10/09 – 01/10	- GECCo will put together resources that help faculty more easily develop assessment instruments and work with the Faculty Resource Center and the Instructional Design Center to organize events focused on instrument development
7. Initial Assessment ²	01/10 – 05/10	- GECCo will coordinate assessment in spring
8. Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results	Spring 2010	- GECCo Category Representatives can serve as consultants for the data analysis and interpretation process
9. Reflection and Response to Assessment Results	Summer and Fall 2010	- GECCo will provide templates and examples to Gen Ed category faculty to help in summarizing results, their interpretation, and planned responses (if any)
10. Dissemination of Results and Planned Changes ³	Disseminate results in Fall 2010	- GECCo will help to coordinate the dissemination of information between Gen Ed categories and schools, as well as to the bodies to which it reports

- The preliminary map outlined in Appendix 4, as one product of the Minnesota Institute, is subject to change and revision by the faculty in fall 2009.
- Instrument development would then be left to the faculty involved in the Gen Ed assessment effort, as a task to be undertaken after outcomes have been determined. Depending on the instruments ultimately used, and professor preference, assessments may take place anytime during the Spring 2010 semester. Analysis of the data would be carried out by involved faculty.

¹ Friends Hall has already been booked for 09/30, for this meeting

² Initial Assessment in Spring 2010 will be a pilot. A few courses in each category will be assessed. Assessment of *all* Gen Ed courses will be on a rolling basis, i.e., not every class will be assessed every semester, but over a (e.g.) three-year window all GE courses will have been assessed.

³ We recommend that the initial round of assessment be recognized as preliminary data; any changes to the GE curriculum, whether major or minor, should only be made after several semesters of data have been collected.

Appendix 6: Vignettes about “High Impact Practices

The following are ‘high impact practices’ that were mentioned time and again at the Institute and that resonated with us.

Identifying Need

- We need to publicize and make accessible the results of national studies of high-impact practices, and study them on our campus as well. The results of these studies can be used to give information back to the faculty about learning at Ramapo. The data can be used to create an evidenced based rationale for program and curricular changes. An example was the work of the Wabash College where they distributed results from student surveys by giving faculty a quiz about the results of data analysis.

Building Thematic Learning Communities

- Thematic learning communities are a system for organizing learning in cohesive grouping around a central theme. Freshman students at IUPUI have the option of a themed first semester with embedded Gen Ed components and a student and faculty cohort that participates in all semester classes. The students in these learning communities showed greater GPA, retention and graduation rates. FYS⁴ integrated with advisement is also part of the Gen Ed component of the program
- Research at IUPUI shows that the layering of programs that scaffold student adjustment from pre-entrance bridge programs to FYS to freshman thematic learning communities enhance the impact of each program on student success, meaning that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Implementing E-Portfolio Assessment

- Institution wide portfolio assessments are being used very successfully in a number of schools. Our interest would be to design an institution wide portfolio assessment that provided evidence that our students are meeting our LGOs. The portfolio would have a Gen Ed foundation that the interested majors could build on to create a full curriculum portfolio that represented Gen Ed and the students’ major.
- We have various portfolio models in current use by Ramapo programs, including Nursing, Contemporary Arts, World Language and Teacher Education. For example, the Teacher Certification Program currently requires all students to submit an e-portfolio for purposes of program evaluation. A sample of the portfolios are evaluated by a group of TE faculty and the results are used to modify and improve the quality of the teaching and learning in the program. Such models may provide a foundation from which to develop an institution-wide portfolio assessment system.

Sequencing Gen Ed Courses

- Adjustments in the registration process should be instituted that require students to take their Gen Ed courses within their Freshman and Sophomore years (with exceptions) to ensure that they are truly a foundation for in-depth study in the major. Key courses (College English, Social Issues) could become prereqs for the 200/300 level Gen Ed requirements.

⁴ First Year Seminar

Engaging Community and Promoting Ownership

- In our conversations with Ann Ferren she really emphasized the idea of the personal, bottom up approach to creating an assessment culture at our campus. She downplayed the bureaucratic and administration driven model. She encouraged us to talk to our friends and colleagues over lunch-create an excitement about these practices within the faculty.
- Ann Ferren's suggestions dovetailed with our conversations with Lisa Waxfield, of Cal State Long Beach who doggedly committed herself to getting it done without extensive resources - and she got it done. Commit to the goals of improving learning, each one individually, using the resources that you have and build from there. Using the Tom Sawyer model, we need to build, piece by piece, and embed assessment in our own courses to see how it works. 'Think globally, act locally'. We can then engage others as evaluators and gradually, slowly build a full scale assessment program.
- We discussed the importance of paying attention to the affective environment, how our messages come across to others, and the importance of transparency and redundancy in getting our message out to the faculty. We need websites, town hall meetings, visits to convening groups, Deans' meetings, Unit Councils, Faculty Assembly. Our message needs to be everywhere.

Embedding Co-Curricular activities in Gen Ed

- The Wagner College Plan was interesting. They looked at the whole college and there seemed to be a unifying focus as they redesigned the whole program for the benefit of student learning to engage students in civic activities (service learning) as part of the Gen Ed and the major. Also noted was the success of the Provost's informal meetings with the whole faculty in small groups over the semester to enhance vertical communication.

Helping Students at Risk to create an identity as a student in their freshman year

- This presentation looked at African American student achievement and suggested that high-impact practices be implemented to help them create an identity as a scholar early in their college career. The work of Herman Blake was impressive as achievement, retention and graduation of African American students was raised substantially as a result of these practices, which included high challenge assignments with scaffolded support.

Securing Funding for Gen Ed Innovations

- It is imperative that Ramapo look for collaborations with other institutions to help develop and fund some of these initiatives. While Ramapo is good at planting a thousand seeds, we are not as good at watering them. To get away from the "let a thousand flowers wilt" paradigm we need to commit ourselves to finding the resources to support these teaching and learning enhancements to our curriculum and assessment efforts.

Discussing the Question "What makes a great student?"

- Ask and answer the question "What 3 things were special about your favorite student as they walked across the stage at graduation?"

Appendix 7: Experiential Learning/Civic Engagement

As stated in the LGO, experiential learning and civic engagement are central features of the College's mission. As such, they must be periodically re-examined and perhaps refashioned to be more fully congruent with the needs and aspirations of our 21st century student-citizens. The College's commitment to experiential learning and civic engagement is longstanding and has broad support among the faculty and throughout the institution. Many majors and individual courses require various degrees of experiential learning, but there has been little exploration of a more developmental and structured approach to experiential learning and civic engagement throughout the general education curriculum. If such an approach were to be considered by those in decision-making roles, student learning and commitment to personal and social responsibility might be enriched as they have been at other institutions throughout the United States. While Ramapo has no data (of its own) to support this claim, other institutions such as Wagner College (Staten Island, NY) have begun rigorous assessment of their students' experiential learning outcomes.

Appendix 8: Revisions to the Gen Ed Institute Working Group Report and Recommendations

Revisions to the original Gen Ed Working Group Report and Recommendations are listed and explained below.

Content Revisions:

1. Changes to Appendix 5: The timetable created while in Minnesota, and given in Appendix 5, was revised after returning to Ramapo College, in July of 2009, as a result of feedback from Larry D'Antonio (Chair of ARC) and Eddie Saiff (Faculty Assembly President). Also, Appendix 5 now sets down in writing the role of the Gen Ed Ad Hoc Working Group in organizing and leading some of the activities described in the timetable, up until the formation of GECCo.
2. "Ex Officio" Member Changes for GECCo: The question mark at the end of "Ex-Officio" was removed for the Vice Provost for Curriculum and Assessment, based on feedback given in a meeting with Larry D'Antonio and Beth Barnett (Provost). Also, three other "Ex Officio" members were added to GECCo. Those members were the Director of the Instructional Design Center, a representative from Cahill Center, and a representative from Advising.

Other Revisions:

1. An "acknowledgements" paragraph was added to the introduction to make it clear that this document is almost wholly derived from work done earlier by the Gen Ed Institute Working Group.
2. A title page and a "Table of Contents" page were added to the original document. Content was re-paginated and slightly re-formatted to account for these changes. Also, authorship of this document has been altered to reflect differences in team composition between the Gen Ed Institute Working Group and the Gen Ed Ad Hoc Working Group.
3. Clarity was improved for one sentence on page five of the original document (page six of this document). It was made clear in the revised sentence that "specific time" referred to "specific time in their college experience", and not to "time of day" or "day of the week."
4. Four English issues were fixed (one typo, one punctuation issue, and two articles were added before nouns), italics were removed from one word, a handful of minor wording changes were made, and the "References" section was re-named "References and Further Resources."