

**BERGEN COMMUNITY COLLEGE  
COMMITTEE ON GENERAL EDUCATION**

**The Goals and Objectives of the BCC General Education Program**

**PREFACE**

The concept of general education is a modern expression of an ancient idea: the idea of the well-educated, and therefore cultured and liberated, person, in touch with the realities of human existence, both past and present. A general education is what all truly educated people have (and ought to have) in common. As such, general education is opposed to excessive academic "individualism" and "overspecialization," to the fragmentation of the learning process via "disciplinism" and "departmentalism." General education stresses common or shared learning, the communal-social rather than the private-individualistic aspects of the general educational enterprise. (Cronk, 1983, 13)

Bergen Community College recognizes that a general education is composed of two inextricably related components: (1) a set of processes that involves the gathering, interpretation, and presentation of knowledge and (2) a body of knowledge that is common to all well-educated individuals. Although some courses will focus on process activities (e.g., English Composition I and II and Speech Communication) and other courses will focus on presenting a discrete body of knowledge (e.g., courses in the Natural Sciences, Mathematics, the Humanities, the Social Sciences, and Wellness and Exercise Science), there is a fundamental interaction between the process and content levels of education, which is evident throughout the general education program at Bergen Community College.

Therefore, with the help of their general education courses, students will develop process skills (e.g., critical thinking, effective writing and oral communication, and research techniques)

and will become familiar with discrete bodies of knowledge from the Humanities, the Natural Sciences and Mathematics, the Social Sciences, and Wellness and Exercise Science. Students will develop an understanding of the basic themes in each of these areas through course-specific applications of process skills. The aim of all general education courses is to take students beyond the acquisition of course-specific knowledge and beyond the immediate application of learning and to provide an enduring foundation of basic general knowledge on which they can build (Hirsch, *passim*).

The goals and objectives of the general education program at Bergen Community College have been developed with reference to the college's mission statement. In particular, the following points from the mission statement are reflected in the general education goals:

1. To develop in students a desire for lifelong learning.
2. To provide students with the motivation, knowledge, and skills necessary for continued and independent living.
3. To improve the reading, speaking, writing, mathematical, and interpersonal skills of students.
4. To assist students in clarifying their personal values and their philosophies of life.
5. To assist students in thinking critically about current events and issues and in acquiring an adequate understanding of society and its institutions.
6. To develop in students an understanding and appreciation of the histories and cultures of both western and non-western societies.
7. To assist students in acquiring the attitudes and skills necessary to apply systematic, critical, and discriminating thought to the solution of problems.
8. To provide a general education program calculated to equip students with a broad academic and cultural background and to enable them to think and communicate effectively.

General education programs have been criticized for requiring students to take widely varied groups of courses that appear to have little or no connection to one another.

It appears that there is little or no effort to synthesize and integrate within and across courses and disciplines in the general education program. The general education courses are too often taught as a simplified introduction to a discipline rather than as courses that are part of a program providing a liberal arts foundation (Luckenbill and McCabe, 18).

Bergen Community College recognizes the importance of synthesizing and integrating the information and processes taught in its general education courses. This concern for

integration is an integral part of the program and is reflected simultaneously on two separate levels:

1. The content and process components of a general education are largely inseparable, and courses will systematically present both levels of knowledge, and
2. The content of a general education includes overlapping bodies of knowledge that may be presented in a variety of courses with a variety of foci and a variety of emphases. Students and faculty will endeavor to recognize and understand the significance of these overlapping substantive areas.

The general education goals and objectives that appear on the following pages assume that students will demonstrate the knowledge of content and processes at a level that is at or higher than a minimal competency level. Some students may not achieve competency in all areas, but the college will determine a level of minimal overall competency that is necessary for the fulfillment of general education requirements. It is expected that most students will exceed these minimal levels in all or most of the components of a general education.

Nevertheless, colleges do not create a final product; they are way stations on the road from life's beginning to its conclusion. College general education programs assist students in the development of skills and knowledge that will aid them in their life's journey. There is no finality to the tasks that are engaged in by college students; they are tasks that were started before entering college and that will be continued throughout the remainder of the individual's life. Thus, the following goals and objectives are steps in a learning process that is a lifetime activity. As a result of an effective general education program, students should demonstrate growth in each of the goal areas designated in the following pages.

#### **NOTE ON "ASSESSMENT CRITERIA"**

The following pages list the ten goals of the Bergen Community College general education program. Each goal is followed by a list of learning objectives, and many of the objectives are accompanied by "assessment criteria," which are statements of ways in which student progress toward the objectives may be tested and evaluated. These assessment criteria are presented herein for purposes of illustration only; they are not "official" or necessary parts of the present document. The development of such official assessment criteria is a task yet to be completed by the faculty of Bergen Community College.

## **GOAL 1: COMMUNICATION**

**STUDENTS WILL COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY IN BOTH SPEECH AND WRITING.**

### **1.1. OBJECTIVE**

Students will analyze, comprehend, and evaluate what they read, hear, and see.

### **1.2. OBJECTIVE**

Students will state and evaluate the views and findings of others.

### **1.3. OBJECTIVE**

Students will write and speak clearly and effectively in standard American English.

### **1.4. OBJECTIVE**

Students will logically and persuasively state and support in speech and in writing their points of view or findings.

### **1.5. OBJECTIVE**

Students will evaluate, revise, and edit their communications.

**Note: Separate assessment criteria were not developed for the objectives under this goal. These objectives are to be covered by assessment criteria under goals 4 through 10.**

## **GOAL 2: CRITICAL THINKING, PROBLEM SOLVING, AND INFORMATION PROCESSING**

**STUDENTS WILL USE CRITICAL THINKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS IN ANALYZING INFORMATION GATHERED THROUGH DIFFERENT MEDIA AND FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES.**

### **2.1. OBJECTIVE**

Students will identify a problem and analyze it in terms of its significant parts and in terms of the information needed to solve it.

### **2.2. OBJECTIVE**

Students will select and use appropriate sources of information in a variety of formats.

### **2.3. OBJECTIVE**

Students will evaluate information on the basis of its origin, viewpoint, relevance, accuracy, and completeness.

### **2.4. OBJECTIVE**

Students will recognize weaknesses in arguments such as the use of false or disputable premises, suppression of contrary evidence, faulty reasoning, and emotional loading.

### **2.5. OBJECTIVE**

Students will formulate and evaluate possible solutions to problems, and they will defend the solutions they choose to implement.

### **2.6. OBJECTIVE**

Students will use computers and other electronic tools to access, analyze, and present information.

**Note: Separate assessment criteria were not developed for the objectives under this goal. These objectives are to be covered by assessment criteria under goals 4 through 10.**

### **GOAL 3: ETHICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**STUDENTS WILL RECOGNIZE, ANALYZE, AND ASSESS ETHICAL ISSUES AND SITUATIONS.**

#### **3.1. OBJECTIVE**

Students will identify the ethical implications of an issue or a situation.

#### **3.2. OBJECTIVE**

Students will analyze and evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of differing perspectives on an ethical issue or situation.

#### **3.3. OBJECTIVE**

Students will take a position on an ethical issue or situation and defend it with logical arguments.

**Note: Separate assessment criteria were not developed for the objectives under this goal. These objectives are to be covered by assessment criteria under goals 4 through 10.**

## **GOAL 4: QUANTITATIVE SKILLS**

**STUDENTS WILL APPLY APPROPRIATE MATHEMATICAL AND STATISTICAL CONCEPTS AND OPERATIONS TO INTERPRET DATA AND TO SOLVE PROBLEMS.**

### **4.1 OBJECTIVE**

Students will translate quantifiable problems into mathematical terms and solve these problems using mathematical or statistical operations.

#### **4.1.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a word problem requiring skills at the arithmetical or elementary algebra level, students will be able to identify variables in the problem and specify whether they are known or unknown.

#### **4.1.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will choose, from a list provided, the appropriate model to solve the word problem.

#### **4.1.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select, from a list provided, an appropriate estimated solution to the word problem.

#### **4.1.4 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will produce solutions to the word problem (the question may specify desired decimal places required). Solutions will be in appropriate units.

#### **4.1.5 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will explain how the numerical solution obtained solves the word problem.

## **4.2 OBJECTIVE**

Students will construct graphs and charts, interpret them, and draw appropriate conclusions.

### **4.2.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a description of an experiment with a potentially ethical dimension, students will be able to create tables and/or graphs of sets of data to illustrate their relationships.

### **4.2.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will describe relationships, interpolate and extrapolate data, detect trends, and identify extremes in given tables and/or graphs.

### **4.2.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select the tables and/or graphs that best support the arguments provided.

### **4.2.4 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will justify the choices made in 4.2.3.

## **GOAL 5: SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**

**STUDENTS WILL DEVELOP AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURE OF SCIENCE AND WILL BE ABLE TO DISTINGUISH SCIENCE FROM OTHER FIELDS OF STUDY. STUDENTS WILL APPLY THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD OF INQUIRY TO DRAW CONCLUSIONS BASED ON VERIFIABLE EVIDENCE; USE SCIENTIFIC THEORIES AND KNOWLEDGE TO UNDERSTAND THE NATURAL WORLD; AND EXPLAIN THE IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC THEORIES, DISCOVERIES, AND TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGES ON SOCIETY.**

### **5.1 OBJECTIVE**

Students will define science and describe its limitations.

#### **5.1.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a list of fields of study, students will identify those which are scientific and those which are not.

#### **5.1.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a question, students will identify whether or not the question can be answered by applying the scientific method of inquiry.

### **5.2 OBJECTIVE**

Using the scientific method and standard laboratory procedures, students will analyze a problem and draw conclusions from data.

#### **5.2.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a scientific research question, students will be able to identify observations relevant to this question.

#### **5.2.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will choose, from a list provided, an appropriate and testable hypothesis for this research question.

#### **5.2.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given several experimental designs, students will select a design that would be most effective in testing the hypothesis in 5.2.2. Each experimental design will include descriptions of independent and dependent variables, controls, standards, and sample sizes.

#### **5.2.4 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will identify the assumptions implied by their hypothesis and chosen design (e.g. given a free fall experiment to measure the acceleration due to gravity, the assumption is made that the acceleration due to gravity is a constant).

#### **5.2.5 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given actual research data concerning the hypothesis in 5.2.2, students will employ mathematical skills to analyze and interpret the data and to select, from a list provided, a conclusion that these data support, defending the selection with arguments.

#### **5.2.6 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will show whether or not the assumptions identified in 5.2.4 are consistent with the conclusions drawn from the research provided.

#### **5.2.7 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a set of possible research questions, students will indicate the next step of the research.

### **5.3 OBJECTIVE**

Students will distinguish between scientific theory and scientific discovery and between science and its technological application, and will explain the impact of science and technology on society.

#### **5.3.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will distinguish between science and its technological applications.

#### **5.3.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will describe the role that accident and chance often play in scientific discovery and technological advance.

#### **5.3.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select a scientific discovery or theory or a technology from a list provided and discuss its impact on society.

## **GOAL 6: SOCIETY & HUMAN BEHAVIOR**

**STUDENTS WILL USE SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE THEORIES AND CONCEPTS TO ANALYZE HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS.**

### **6.1 OBJECTIVE**

Students will analyze and discuss behavioral or societal issues using theories and concepts from a social or behavioral science.

#### **6.1.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will be able to select and analyze a problem (e.g., crime, substance abuse, mental illness, juvenile delinquency, poverty, racism, sexism) by determining its most significant causes.

#### **6.1.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will be able to suggest possible changes to reduce the occurrence of the problem identified in 6.1.1. and predict the consequences of the proposal using concepts and theories from any of the following social or behavioral sciences: economics, political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology, geography.

### **6.2 OBJECTIVE**

Students will explain how social institutions and organizations influence individual behavior and how individual behavior influences social institutions and organizations.

#### **6.2.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select, from a list provided, a social or political institution (e.g., religion, family, education, government) and explain, using concepts and theories from any of the social and behavioral sciences, how that institution affects individual behavior positively or negatively and how individual behavior affects the institution positively or negatively.

### **6.3 OBJECTIVE**

Students will describe how social and behavioral scientists gather and analyze data and draw conclusions.

#### **6.3.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a description of a social or behavioral science study, students will identify its strengths and weaknesses in terms of sampling, data collection, and analysis, and evaluate the conclusions drawn.

#### **6.3.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given charts, graphs, or quantitative data, students will identify correct and incorrect conclusions that can be drawn and based on the information provided explain why these conclusions would be correct or incorrect.

#### **6.3.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will describe a quantitative or qualitative methodology a social or behavioral scientist would use to study a particular topic (e.g., recent immigrants overwhelmingly voting Democratic rather than Republican, the effectiveness of a new method of teaching mathematics, the effectiveness of a new inpatient program for the mentally ill).

## **GOAL 7: AESTHETIC PERSPECTIVE**

**STUDENTS WILL ANALYZE AND EVALUATE WORKS OF THE LITERARY, VISUAL, OR PERFORMING ARTS.<sup>1</sup>**

### **7.1 OBJECTIVE**

Students will describe commonly used approaches and criteria for analyzing a work of art.

#### **7.1.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION<sup>2</sup>**

Students will describe the commonly used approaches (e.g., as historical perspective, structural design, etc.) for analyzing works of art.

#### **7.1.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION<sup>3</sup>**

Student will describe the component(s) of a particular approach and/or criterion (e.g., historical perspective, structural design, etc.) used in discussing a particular work of art (e.g., a novel, a symphony, a painting, etc.).

### **7.2 OBJECTIVE**

Students will analyze works of art using commonly used approaches and criteria.

#### **7.2.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given the analysis of a familiar work of art, students will defend their agreements or disagreements with the main points of the analysis.

#### **7.2.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a work of art, students will analyze and interpret the work using a specific critical approach.

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<sup>1</sup>For this goal, the 7.1 Objective deals with the "how-to" process for analyzing a work in the literary, visual, or performing arts, while the 7.2 Objective involves students in the actual analyzing of particular works of art. In effect, students will use the analytical approaches studied/learned in 7.1 for achieving the 7.2 Objective.

<sup>2</sup>Works of the literary, visual, or performing arts can be analyzed in a variety of ways: historical perspective, emotional content, psychological meaning, etc. The 7.1.1 Assessment Criterion deals with this.

<sup>3</sup> Works of the literary, visual, or performing arts can take a variety of forms, e.g., novels, short stories, poetry, paintings, sculptures, etchings, symphonies, dramas, dance performances, etc. The 7.1.2 Assessment Criterion is concerned with the broad range and types of art.

## **GOAL 8: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

**STUDENTS WILL ANALYZE HISTORICAL EVENTS AND MOVEMENTS IN WESTERN AND/OR NON-WESTERN SOCIETIES AND ASSESS THEIR SUBSEQUENT SIGNIFICANCE.**

### **8.1 OBJECTIVE**

Students will state the causes of a major historical event and analyze the impact of that event on a nation or civilization.

#### **8.1.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select an event from a list provided or identify one themselves, briefly describe it, explain its major causes, and evaluate its major impact.

[Sample Event List: e.g., World War I, World War II, the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Italian Renaissance, the rise of Buddhism in ancient India, the spread of Buddhism from India to Asia, the spread of Islam, Colonialism, the African-slave trade, the cultural flowering of ancient Athens, the rise and development of Christianity, the Scientific Revolution, the Industrial Revolution, the Russian Revolution, the Holocaust, the War in Vietnam, the Berlin Wall.]

### **8.2 OBJECTIVE**

Students will discuss a major idea, movement, invention, or discovery and explain how it affected the world or American society.

#### **8.2.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select, from a list provided, or identify one themselves, an idea, movement, invention, or discovery and describe the effects of the idea, movement, invention, or discovery on the world or on American society and the changes resulting from those effects.

#### **8.2.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select, from a list provided, or identify one themselves, an idea, movement, invention, or discovery and evaluate the foremost changes resulting from the selected idea, movement, invention, or discovery in terms of their positive or negative impact on the world or on American society.

[The 8.2.2. list might include the following ideas, movements, inventions, and discoveries: Ideas: the Heliocentric Theory; the theory of evolution; liberty, equality, and fraternity; monotheism; nationalism; individualism; imperialism; progress.

Movements: the Reformation; communism; feminism; the Civil Rights Movement; capitalism; the Enlightenment; democracy. Inventions: the printing press; the telegraph; the telephone; the automobile; the airplane; gun powder; the computer; the internal combustion engine; the cotton gin; nuclear weapons. Discoveries: the New World; the germ origins of disease; gravity.]

### **8.3 OBJECTIVE**

Students will show how various interpretations of historical events are influenced by their time, class, culture, and perspective.

#### **8.3.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will be able to read interpretations of an event or era and explain why the interpretations differ.

#### **8.3.2. ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select an issue or event (e.g., slavery, the labor movement, Affirmative Action), compare and contrast views on the issue or event from opposing perspectives, and logically defend one of these views.

## **GOAL 9: DIVERSITY & GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE**

**STUDENTS WILL ANALYZE THE IMPLICATIONS OF COMMONALTIES AND DIFFERENCES AMONG CULTURALLY DIVERSE PEOPLES.**

### **9.1. OBJECTIVE**

Students will link cultural practices and perspectives with the geographical and/or historical conditions from which they arose.

#### **9.1.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will match cultural practices and perspectives from list A with a region or country of origin in list B to show their association.

#### **9.1.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given two film clips or two passages portraying dissimilar cultures, students will describe how the worldviews or perspectives presented are influenced by, or are expressive of, such factors as the geography, historical development, or values of a region or country.

#### **9.1.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

For one of the two cultures presented in 9.1.2., students will select a specific cultural characteristic of that culture and describe how geography or history may have affected the development of that characteristic.

### **9.2 OBJECTIVE**

Students will explain why an understanding of differences in people's backgrounds is particularly important to American society.

#### **9.2.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a list of groups that reflect American diversity, students will select two groups and describe in detail the similarities and differences between the values, perspectives, or behaviors of the two groups.

### **9.2.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will explain why it is important to the well-being of American society for the two groups selected in 9.2.1. to develop mutual understanding with respect to each group's values, perspectives, or behaviors.

### **9.2.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will compare and contrast the backgrounds and cultural characteristics of current immigrants and refugees to America with the backgrounds and cultural characteristics of earlier immigrants and explain what changes have taken place in the student's region or state as a result of immigration.

## **9.3 OBJECTIVE**

Students will recognize and explain the consequences of prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory actions.

### **9.3.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Define both prejudice and discrimination and give examples of each.

### **9.3.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given examples of behaviors, opinions, and attitudes, students will indicate which are or are not prejudicial.

### **9.3.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select one group that has been historically discriminated against (i.e. those identified in a typical Equal Opportunity Employment statement) and describe specific discriminatory actions that this group has endured.

### **9.3.4 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will discuss what impact prejudice and discrimination have had on American society.

## **9.4 OBJECTIVE**

Students will recognize the needs and concerns common to culturally diverse peoples.

### **9.4.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

From a list provided, students will select a need or basic concern common to all nations and cultures and show how a country's fulfillment of this need or concern has both positive and negative effects on global society.

[Sample needs/concerns: food, shelter, health, safety, work, transportation, family, advancement, recognition, wealth.]

## **9.5 OBJECTIVE**

Students will recognize contributions made by people from various nations and cultures.

### **9.5.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will select, from a list provided, two dissimilar nations or cultures and describe the contributions made by people from those nations or cultures in one or more of the following areas:

- the natural sciences
- the social sciences
- engineering/technology
- historiography
- philosophy
- religion
- art
- architecture
- literature
- language
- music
- kinship systems
- law
- government/politics
- education
- agriculture

## **GOAL 10: HEALTH & WELL-BEING**

**STUDENTS WILL DEMONSTRATE HOW TO USE THE CONCEPTS OF OPTIMUM HEALTH AND FITNESS TO IMPROVE AND MAINTAIN THEIR WELL-BEING.**

### **10.1 OBJECTIVE**

Students will identify risk factors in lifestyle health issues (e.g., infections, heart disease, diabetes, obesity, osteoporosis) and describe how changing behavior can minimize these risk factors.

#### **10.1.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will identify and associate risk factors (e.g., substance abuse, sexual behavior, nutrition practices) to lifestyle health issues (e.g., infectious disease, heart disease, diabetes, obesity).

#### **10.1.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will locate research findings to show a relationship between risk factors and well-being.

#### **10.1.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will describe a specific behavioral change and its effect on selected health issues (e.g., diet, exercise, stress management).

### **10.2 OBJECTIVE**

Students will analyze an exercise mode relative to its effect on physical and mental well-being.

#### **10.2.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will describe the beneficial effects that exercise has on physical and mental well-being.

#### **10.2.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will discuss the intensity, frequency, and duration variables relative to aerobic and anaerobic exercise models.

### **10.2.3. ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a description of an exercise program/activity for people of various ages and physical conditions, students will modify the program/activity to ensure safe and beneficial effects.

### **10.2.4 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will develop a personal plan for exercise programs/activities that will contribute to their life-long health and well-being.

## **10.3 OBJECTIVE**

Students will create a model of a personal plan for alternative ways of using discretionary time that contributes to their well-being.

### **10.3.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will evaluate a selected exercise mode relative to its physical and emotional benefits.

## **10.4 OBJECTIVE**

Students will analyze selected methods that can be used as a personal plan for stress management.

### **10.4.1 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will identify internal and external stressors based on personal experience.

### **10.4.2 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will describe behavioral reactions caused by stressors.

### **10.4.3 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Given a list of specific coping mechanisms, students will compare and contrast the coping mechanisms in terms of their adaptive and maladaptive nature.

### **10.4.4 ASSESSMENT CRITERION**

Students will develop a plan for stress management using selected techniques.

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