**Rationale for NDGEC Proficiency Statements**

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The North Dakota General Education Council (NDGEC) began as a grassroots, faculty-led organization whose primary goals were to improve articulation and transfer of general education courses among North Dakota higher learning institutions--including public and many participating private and tribal universities--and to provide a common forum for discussing common general education issues in the state. During that time, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) developed the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative which articulated a set of Essential Learning Outcomes (ELOs) developed with feedback from faculty across the country. By 2010, the NDGEC helped North Dakota to become recognized as a LEAP State by AAC&U. The North Dakota University System (NDUS) agrees with the LEAP initiative, and over the last several General Education Summits the NDGEC has endorsed five of the ELOs as statewide outcomes: written communication, oral communication, critical and creative thinking, quantitative reasoning, and breadth of knowledge.

North Dakota higher learning institutions have benefitted from the General Education Requirement and Transfer Agreement (GERTA), which ensures transferability of common courses from one institution to another. Recently, the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) began the Interstate Passport Initiative, a new approach to transfer that shifts focus from credit hours and course descriptions to student learning outcomes. The Lumina Foundation, with strong support from AAC&U and various accreditation agencies, including the Higher Learning Commission, also promotes competency-based education to ensure students are acquiring outcomes and achieving goals associated with their degree profiles. Working with the Lumina Foundation, AAC&U established the Quality Collaborative, inviting North Dakota to participate through the NDGEC. Over the last two years, NDGEC members began aligning student-learning outcomes with degree proficiency profiles.

As stewards of general education in North Dakota, the NDGEC has developed proficiency statements corresponding to the five ELOs approved at the General Education Summit at Bottineau at April 2014. These proficiency statements clarify outcomes students should have demonstrated upon completion of general education and discipline program requirements at the two-year level. As indicators of competency-based education, student transcripts in the future might contain notations that students have established proficiency in any or all of these five ELOs, subject to the endorsement of the authorizing institution pursuant to internal policies in compliance with NDUS 403.7. Such transcript notations will be in addition to existing endorsements in compliance with GERTA.

NDGEC continues to serve as an advisory board to its member institutions, the NDUS, and independent and tribal colleges in North Dakota. Approval of these proficiency statements as endorsed by NDGEC supports North Dakota’s existing commitment to faculty-led oversight of General Education while maintaining autonomy of NDGEC member institutions to oversee assessment and documentation of their existing student learning outcomes.