

GenEd Committee Response to the AAC&U Liberal Education & America's Promise (LEAP) Initiative

We applaud the principles and mission of LEAP member institutions, and we support the LEAP Initiative; but we strongly object to the UFC resolution proposed in Circular U4-2011. The General Education curriculum at IU Bloomington has been created and developed through several years of intensive work by the IUB faculty, and we believe that all undergraduate students who earn a baccalaureate degree from IU Bloomington should participate in this curricular program.

The LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes are clearly reflected in the IU Bloomington GenEd curriculum, and the faculty of IUB have affirmed our belief in the importance of a liberal education, yet the LEAP outcomes are but one element in the IUB GenEd curriculum. These broadly defined outcomes do not, in and of themselves, suffice to prepare an undergraduate student for success at IUB. As the flagship campus of the Indiana University system, IU Bloomington has been called upon by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education to be more selective, and to raise the academic bar higher—to build a culture of academic rigor that sets this campus apart from nearly every other institution in the state. That level of rigor must begin at the beginning of a student's career and continue to graduation. The faculty of IU Bloomington have designed the GenEd curriculum to be an integral part of an IUB degree—to serve as the foundation upon which an IUB baccalaureate degree is built. We cannot blindly outsource the building of that foundation and still expect all students to have the skills, capabilities, and habits of mind that will enable them to succeed, both in their time at IUB and in their lives following graduation.

IU Bloomington welcomes well qualified transfer students. The General Education Committee has provided numerous opportunities for the application of transfer credit toward the fulfillment of the IUB GenEd requirements, but these opportunities rest on faculty review of transfer credit on a course-by-course basis, where level of instruction, method of delivery, and standards of competency are evaluated in comparison to the instruction and expectations on this campus. Desired learning outcomes are important, but so are standards of achievement. IU Bloomington students, whether they be transfer students or those who matriculated here as freshmen, should all be expected to meet IUB standards. It is not enough to say that students should study mathematics and attain quantitative literacy. The IUB GenEd Program requires all students to successfully complete one of a select number of courses that emphasize mathematical modeling, and each of these courses has been thoroughly vetted by faculty experts in mathematics from across the campus. This single requirement is indicative of the high expectations that the faculty of IUB have for our students. Nevertheless, it is possible to complete all but 6 credit hours of the IUB GenEd curriculum through transfer credit, but that credit must be reviewed properly to ensure that all students meet the same high standards of achievement, are equally prepared, and are thereby given the same opportunities for success. In a recent article in *Inside Higher Education*, Debra Humphreys, Vice President for Communications and Public Affairs of AAC&U, is quoted as saying, "In the race to completion, there is this assumption that a credit is a credit is a credit, and when you get to the magic number of credits, you will have learned what you need to learn. . . . You can accumulate an awful lot of credits and not learn anything." The faculty of IU Bloomington do not subscribe to the belief that credit is credit is credit, nor do we believe that shared general learning outcomes are sufficient to ensure equivalency. As members of the General Education Committee, we have been charged by the faculty of Indiana University Bloomington to ensure that all IUB undergraduate students share in both the high expectations and the wide range of opportunities that comprise the IUB GenEd curriculum. We take this charge seriously, and we are not prepared to delegate this responsibility to any other institution.