Proposal #1 to Tufts Faculty of the Arts and Sciences

The Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee (LOAC) proposes the following resolution:

The Arts and Sciences faculty authorizes LOAC to develop Distribution Area Learning Objectives to guide the assessment of student learning in courses taken for the purpose of meeting Tufts’ Distribution requirements.

Rationale: In 2010, Tufts began a small scale project to assess student learning outcomes in the core curriculum in order to meet the NEASC requirements that Tufts assess student learning in its “general education curriculum” as well as in its departments and programs. In their report, NEASC noted that while the “well-defined and faculty-owned learning outcomes and assessment plans for the University’s undergraduate majors” were noteworthy, the “work is yet to be done to articulate and assess general education and institution-level learning outcomes.” (NEASC, Letter to President, November 4, 2013). Tufts will be required to give emphasis, in its 5-year report in 2018, to its “success in articulating and assessing student achievement of general education and institutional level learning outcomes and using the results for improvement.” (ibid). In order to develop a coherent plan for supporting faculty work in assessing student learning outcomes, we must “articulate” the learning objectives that will be used to guide such assessment.

To maintain the spirit of our “faculty-owned” process, we are seeking faculty approval of this resolution to affirm that the faculty authorizes LOAC to continue building faculty capacity to assess student learning outcomes in courses taken to fulfill Distribution Area requirements. The Draft Learning Objectives developed in the pilot project will be the starting point in the next round of projects, all voluntary, designed to assess student learning outcomes. These projects will be reported to NEASC in 2018.

We expect that faculty who teach courses students take to fulfill distribution requirements and who volunteer to participate in the next round of projects will use one or more of the Learning Objectives in their course syllabus (by creating course-specific learning objectives derived from these Learning Objectives). Participants in ongoing projects will be coached as they develop strategies for assessing student attainment of these objectives and use their results to improve teaching and curriculum. Faculty who participate in the projects will also revise the draft learning objectives based on their shared experience with them in an annual collaborative review process led by LOAC.

Members of LOAC:

Harry Bernheim, Drusilla Brown, Thomas Downes, John Fyler, Fulton Gonzalez, David Hammer, Heather Nathans, Donna Qualters, Laura Rogers (Chair), Susan Russinoff, Evan Simpson, Dawn Terkla, Nancy Bauer, Lauren Conoscenti, Sarah Herschel, and Carmen Lowe.

Faculty Participants in the Pilot Project on the Assessment of Learning Outcomes in Distribution Course Requirements:

Natural science: Susan Ernst, Jonathan Kenney, Anne Gardulski, Leon Gunther, George Elmore
Mathematical science: Boris Hasselblatt, Grayson Kimball, Susan Russinoff, Mary Glaser, David Garman
Social science: Chip Gidney, Helen Marrow, Natalie Masouka, Ayanna Thomas, Rich Eichenberg, Jim Ennis
Humanities: David O’Leary, Jeannine Penvenne, Susan Russinoff, David Ekbladh, Sonia Hofkosh, Alisha Rankin, George Scarlett
Arts: David Locke, Christina Maranci, Alice Trexler