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To: Chief Academic Officers, State-Operated Campuses and Community Colleges

From: Patricia Francis, SUNY System Administration
               Tina Good, Suffolk County Community College
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               Co-Chairs, General Education Assessment Review Group (GEAR)

Date: October 18, 2007

Re: Call for Triennial Updates of Campus General Education Assessment
               Plans and Reports on Closing-the-Loop Activities

On behalf of the General Education Assessment Review Group (GEAR), we are asking that your campus submit updates to your existing campus-based General Education plans along with reports on your closing-the-loop activities (i.e., actions you have taken to make program changes based on assessment results). The submission schedule (see Attachment A) will take place on a three-year cycle, with reports due by March 1 of the academic year. All submissions should be submitted in hard copy or electronically to the University Provost.

Background Information:

When the GEAR Group was formed in 2001, former University Provost Peter D. Salins gave the group the following charges:

- Create guidelines for campuses to follow while developing their initial General Education assessment plans;
- Review initial General Education assessment plans to ensure their rigor and comprehensiveness;
- Make recommendations to the Provost regarding plan approvals; and
- Provide ongoing review of campuses' General Education assessment plans.

Using language from the 2000 *Report of the Provost's Advisory Task Force on the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes*, Dr. Salins stated that GEAR's ongoing reviews should "apply the criteria utilized in the initial process review with an emphasis on the extent to which campuses demonstrate their use of assessment results to improve their General Education programs."

Campuses began submitting their assessment plans in Fall 2001, and implementation of those plans began with the 2002-03 academic year. Although GEAR was scheduled to begin its ongoing review of campus plans in 2004-05, in June 2004 the SUNY Board of Trustees passed its resolution on "Strengthened Campus-Based Assessment" (SCBA), requiring campuses to modify their General Education assessment plans for the student learning outcome areas of Mathematics, Critical Thinking [Reasoning], and Basic Communication [Written]. This resolution also stipulated that GEAR should oversee the SCBA process, which consisted of developing SCBA guidelines, reviewing campus plans, and making appropriate recommendations to the Provost's office.

In Spring 2005, former Provost Salins established an Advisory Task Force on Assessment Reporting comprised of campus chief academic officers and faculty as well as representatives from SUNY System Administration. This task force was charged to review and evaluate the effectiveness of current assessment reporting processes as required by the SUNY Assessment Initiative and to consider improvements where appropriate. The *Final Report of the Provost's Advisory Task Force on Assessment Reporting* submitted in May 2006 included the following recommendations:[1]

- Campuses should continue to use assessment data on an ongoing basis to make improvements in courses and curricular programs, especially when such improvements are not considered costly by the campus;
- System Administration should sponsor a series of regional assessment workshops during 2006-07 that focus on areas of need as identified by campuses and faculty leadership, especially as campuses make the transition to Strengthened Campus-Based Assessment; and
- System Administration should promote the GEAR Group and encourage campuses to call upon GEAR Group members for their assistance in campuses' assessment activities as needed.

To begin implementation of these recommendations, GEAR facilitated eight regional SCBA assessment workshops throughout the State in February 2007.

Because of these additional duties, GEAR has been unable to initiate the ongoing review of the campus-based General Education plans as originally charged, but now that the majority of campus SCBA plans have been approved and the SCBA workshops conducted, GEAR is ready to do so as well as to further develop its role as an assessment resource for campuses. Specifically, as described below, we will use the call for campuses to update their General Education assessment plans, with an emphasis on closing-the-loop opportunities, to identify best assessment practices that can then be shared across the System.

Format for Submitting Triennial Updates and Closing-the-Loop Reports:[2]

The document campuses submit should consist of two sections:

1. Section I should provide a relatively detailed description of any changes the campus has made or intends to make to its original campus-based General Education Assessment Plan in assessing each of the ten Knowledge and Skill areas and the two Competencies making up SUNY's General Education Requirement as a result of the knowledge gained during previous assessments. In preparing this section, campuses should refer to GEAR's *Review Process Guidelines*, found at

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[1] All documents cited in this letter as well as further information regarding GEAR activities may be found at *http://www.cortland.edu/GEAR*.

[2] Although GEAR's original charge was to review campus General Education assessment plans on a biennial basis, University Provost Risa Palm recently approved GEAR's recommendation that this review take place every three years since campuses assess General Education learning outcomes on a three-year cycle.

http://www.cortland.edu/gear/GEAR%20Guidelines%2002-01-06.pdf, making sure they address each of the nine criteria included in those guidelines.

Because campuses recently submitted updated plans for Mathematics, Critical Thinking [Reasoning], and Basic Communication [Written] as part of SCBA, this first three-year cycle of update submissions need only address the following areas: Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, American History, Western Civilization, Other World Civilizations, Humanities, The Arts, Foreign Language, Basic Communication (except for the first two Writing outcomes, which are covered under SCBA), and Information Management.

2. Section II should focus specifically on detailing how the campus has used the assessment process and results to improve its General Education program. It would be appropriate for campuses to describe changes in curricular programs and pedagogy based on assessment results as well as changes in the assessment process itself.

Overall, GEAR intends to use information submitted by campuses for two purposes: 1) to ensure that campuses continue to improve their General Education assessment plans and are using assessment results to close the loop, which is also a key focus of Middle States at this time; and 2) to use this process as an opportunity to identify good assessment practices that can be shared system-wide   GEAR will be working throughout Fall 2007 to develop strategies for meeting this second objective, and will provide periodic updates on its Website and the SUNY Assessment listserv.

Should you have questions regarding this matter, please feel free to contact us at:

> Patricia Francis – Patricia.Francis@suny.edu
> Tina Good - goodt@sunysuffolk.edu
> Melanie Vainder – vaindems@farmingdale.edu

In addition, GEAR members, located at campuses across SUNY, are more than willing to come to campuses for the purpose of providing individual consultation on any aspect of the General Education assessment process; you can find a complete listing of GEAR members and contact information at: http://www.cortland.edu/gear/GEARmembers.html.

Thank you for your collegiality in this process, and please let us know if we can provide any additional assistance or information.

Attachment A
General Education Assessment Review Group (GEAR)
Three-Year Schedule of Campus General Education Assessment Reports and
Closing-the-Loop Activities

(Note: Reports are due by March 1of the academic year – a brief reminder that reports are due will be sent in January to campuses with reports due in that year.)

2007-08	**2008-09**	**2009-10**
University at Albany	Binghamton University	University at Buffalo
SUNY ESF	Upstate Medical Univ.	Stony Brook Univ.
SUNY Cortland	SUNY Brockport	SUNY Geneseo
Empire State College	Buffalo State College	SUNY New Paltz
SUNY Fredonia	SUNY Oneonta	College at Old Westbury
SUNY Oswego	SUNY Potsdam	SUNY Plattsburgh
SUNY Purchase	Alfred State College	SUNY Canton
SUNY Delhi	Farmingdale State Coll.	SUNY Cobleskill
SUNY Morrisville	Maritime College	Cayuga CC
Broome CC	SUNYIT	Columbia-Greene CC
Clinton CC	Adirondack CC	Dutchess CC
Erie CC	Corning CC	Genesee CC
Finger Lakes CC	FIT	Herkimer County CC
Hudson Valley CC	Fulton-Montgomery CC	Mohawk Valley CC
Monroe CC	Jamestown CC	Rockland CC
Nassau CC	Jefferson CC	Suffolk County CC
Niagara County CC	North County CC	Sullivan County CC
Orange County CC	Onondaga CC	Tompkins Cortland CC
Westchester CC	Schenectady County CC	Ulster County CC