General Education Assessment Review (GEAR) Group
First Meeting: March 14, 2001, SUNY Cortland

Present: Frances Dearing, Mary Jane Feldman, Joseph Flynn, Patricia Francis (co-chair), Cathleen McColgin, Jack Meacham, Herbert Merrill, Robert Ploutz-Snyder, David Rule, Donald Steven (co-chair), Gary Waller.

Guests: Margaret Bourke (Office of the Vice Provost, Upstate Medical University), Paul Grover (Vice Provost, Upstate Medical University), George Manning (Special Events Coordinator, SUNY Cortland), Melanie Vainder (Professor of English, Director of General Education, Chair of the Assessment Advisory Board, SUNY Farmingdale).

President Judson H. Taylor graciously welcomed the GEAR Group to SUNY Cortland.

I. Conference Organization

Patty Francis announced the following with respect to the General Education Assessment Conference:

- It will be held June 4-5, 2001 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Carrier Circle, Syracuse. She thanked Paul Grover and Margaret Bourke for their efforts in canvassing area for suitable site.

- While the site is very nice, there is a space limitation in that the largest meeting room will only hold 160 people, meaning there will have to be a limit placed on the number of representatives per campus.

- Rates will be $99 for a double, $79 for a single, and 25 single and 60 double rooms have been set aside for registration. (System administration will subsidize hotel costs at $100 per campus.)

- E-mail announcing the conference has been sent by System Administration to the SUNY-wide assessment listserv, asking institutions to hold the dates and to think about two individuals to send.

There was then general discussion of logistical matters, with the following assignments made:

- Donald Steven will coordinate the mailing of the invitation to all campuses, as well as registration materials (for the hotel and the conference), and the preliminary conference program. (DS: These were mailed April 3.). The invitation will come from the University Provost on behalf of conference co-sponsors SUNY Cortland, Upstate Medical Center, the GEAR Group, the University Faculty Senate, and the Community College Faculty Council.

- Melanie Vainder and Frances Dearing will identify appropriate assessment materials to be sent to conference registrants. Francis, Vainder, and Dearing will also work to develop the conference program design and layout.

- Grover and Bourke will take care of any audio-visual equipment needed for the presentations.

- Robert Ploutz-Snyder will take responsibility for setting up a Web site that will feature information about the conference and about the GEAR group in general.

II. Conference Program
The group reviewed draft programs prepared by Jack Meacham and Francis. The following decisions were made:

- Three of the six major sessions will focus on the following:
  - establishing learning outcomes;
  - identifying activities that address the program’s goals and objectives; and
  - using assessment data to make changes in the program.

- Of the remaining three sessions, there will be two that focus on assessment measures and criteria and a final session which focuses on providing a prototype assessment plan campuses may choose to follow (Mary Jane Feldman agreed to head up this final session).

- As much as possible, the first five sessions will provide background information on the particular assessment step being covered and feature a “best practice” institution illustrating that particular step (hopefully from SUNY). Joe Flynn, Herb Merrill, and Gary Waller agreed to e-mail their respective constituents asking them to send suggestions for presenters at these sessions directly to Francis, and Francis will put together the program after getting input from the rest of the GEAR group. Francis will also make every attempt to vary the format of the presentations to maintain interest.

There was also discussion about whether or not a major figure should be invited to address the conference at the evening dinner on June 4. Possibilities suggested included Vic Borden and Tom Angelo. Steven agreed to look into the availability of these persons. Steven will also see if representatives from System Administration (perhaps the Chancellor or Provost) will attend the conference. The group agreed that such attendance would be important. It was also agreed that President Taylor and President Eastwood would offer welcomes to the conference, President Taylor on one day and President Eastwood on the other.

### III. Assessment Seed Grants

Steven announced that System Administration has agreed to provide $70,000 in seed money to be awarded in competitive grants to “best practice” institutions that are engaging in especially innovative assessment practices. He also said that the GEAR Group seems like the logical body to develop guidelines for these grants and judge submissions. Meacham suggested the grants should focus on assessment-related problems that are particularly hard to solve, such as student motivation and faculty buy-in. The group agreed to develop criteria at its next meeting. It also agreed that, if possible, this grant program should be announced at the assessment conference in June.

### IV. Next Meeting

GEAR will meet again on Tuesday, April 24 at Cayuga Community College. The agenda will be:

- Report from the field: Francis and Flynn re General Education conference
- Spring conference program and organization matters
- Goals and process for the distribution of assessment seed grants
- GEAR Web site (Ploutz-Snyder may not be able to make our meeting. If he can’t, he’ll circulate a brief summary of how he sees it working re content and process, and the group will discuss it and give him feedback.)
- The need for clarification for campuses re the frequency of -- and guidelines for the reporting of data from -- campus-based assessment

This meeting summary will be posted on GEAR’s Web page: (http://cortland.edu/oir/gear/) and sent to campus Chief Academic Officers and subscribers to the assessment listserv (ASSESS-L@ls.sysadm.suny.edu).