

HLC Quality Initiative Report:

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Westminster College's
Request for Re-Accreditation in the Open Pathway

The Quality Initiative: An Integral Piece of
the Westminster Experience



Westminster College, Fulton, MO and Mesa, AZ,
Member of Pathways Pioneer Cohort #3

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Part I: Goals and Results

A. Inception and Goals of the Project

The Higher Learning Commission invited Westminster College to participate in Pathways Pioneer Cohort #3 to evaluate the Lumina Foundation's *Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP)* in 2011.

After receiving the invitation, Dr. Carolyn Perry, Dean of Faculty and Vice-President of Academic Affairs, and Dr. David Jones, Chair of the HLC Re-Accreditation Committee, agreed to participate in the Pathways Orientation Workshop in Lisle, Illinois, in June, 2011. Based on what they learned at that workshop, they decided to recommend to the College that Westminster proceed with the Pathways option for reaccreditation. While at the workshop, Drs. Perry and Jones met with representatives from other liberal arts colleges, including Illinois College, Macalester College, Saint Mary's College, and Otterbein College. At the meeting, the colleges tentatively decided that, rather than attempt to test the entire *Degree Qualifications Profile*, they would divide responsibility, with Westminster testing the skills and abilities under the "broad, integrative knowledge" category.

Upon return to campus, Drs. Perry and Jones developed the HLC Re-Accreditation Committee. The following individuals, including members of the faculty, staff, and administration, agreed to join the committee:

Dr. David Jones (Chair), Professor of Psychology

Dr. Ray Brown, Director of Institutional Research

Dr. John Comerford, Vice-President for Institutional Advancement

Dr. Bill Guinee, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Center for Teaching and Learning

Dr. Bob Hansen, Associate Professor of Leadership Studies and Director of the Emerson Center for Leadership and Service

Dr. Therese Miller, Associate Professor of Physical Education and Vice-Chair of the Faculty

Dr. Carolyn Perry, Dean of Faculty and Vice-President of Academic Affairs

Ms. Tina Rajmaira, Vice-President and Dean of Student Life

Dr. Chris Saunders, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Chair of the *New Foundations* General Education Review Committee

Dr. Robert Seelinger, Professor of Classics and Director of Assessment

The committee met throughout Summer and into Fall, 2011 and made two major decisions: 1) to recommend that the college follow the Pathways route to re-accreditation; and 2) to follow the recommendation from Drs. Jones and Perry to develop the Quality Improvement Project around the topic of "broad, integrative knowledge." At the August 19, 2011 opening-year meeting of the faculty, Dr. Jones explained the process of re-accreditation to the faculty and introduced the new Pathways accreditation model, the purpose of Pathways Cohort #3, the idea of the quality improvement project, and the recommendation of the committee. At the September 13, 2011 faculty meeting, the faculty endorsed the committee's recommendation to proceed with the invitation to

become a member of Pathways Cohort #3 and to test the Lumina *DQP* for the Quality Improvement Project. The decision to focus on “broad, integrative knowledge” was quite deliberate, as Westminster has engaged in a variety of projects in the last few years that are relevant to the *DQP* initiative:

- a. The Westminster “Columns Concept” articulated the main goal that Westminster students should become “leaders in a global community.” That concept has stimulated a variety of curricular and co-curricular programs and changes over the past several years, focusing on how that broad scope of global knowledge should be acquired. A good deal of that discussion has involved how to stimulate integrative learning.
- b. The Westminster “Concept for Student Development” has articulated goals for five domains of student developmental growth over their Westminster careers: 1) intellectual development, 2) ethical development, 3) professional development, 4) social development, and 5) development of wellness (physical, spiritual, and mental). Though developed by Student Life, the concept for whole student development also has been approved by the faculty and demonstrates the college’s intentional efforts to better integrate curricular and co-curricular programs.
- c. The college’s *New Foundations* general education program was approved by the faculty in 1996. *New Foundations* consists of three tiers: 1) a foundational tier of courses (Westminster Seminar, Academic Writing, Math, and Foreign Language), 2) a contextual tier (courses required in scientific inquiry, historical perspectives, fundamental questions and values, artistic expression and critical appreciation, human behavior and social institutions, and cultural diversity and global interdependence, and 3) an integrative tier consisting of a single course that is multi-disciplinary in nature. *New Foundations* was designed to be developmental and integrative, whereby students acquire knowledge and skills from each tier that they can apply to the next. However, there has been little campus discussion of the relevance of this program until recently, when a General Education Task Force reviewed the current content of the program.
- d. The Westminster Experience Task Force recently developed a series of recommendations for changes in the college curriculum and co-curricular programs, including: 1) changes to the Westminster Seminar program, 2) a student “experiential learning and leadership” portfolio, 3) new general education requirements to complete two “enriching educational experiences,” including internships, student research projects, service or community-based learning, student teaching, study away (abroad or in-country), or ROTC.
- e. Recent completion and approval of a new Westminster College *Strategic Plan*: “*Westminster 2020: Developing Leaders in a Global Community.*”

With the backdrop of considering the discussion that had already taken place on campus and the desire to focus on how “broad, integrative knowledge” was being taught and learned on campus and how that might be improved, the committee developed the following goals for the project:

- a. To examine the degree to which skills detailed by the *Degree Qualifications Profile* are already being taught by faculty and staff members and learned by Westminster students
- b. To develop and refine teaching and learning methods for better learning of “broad, integrative knowledge,” particularly in Tier III courses, though the committee expected additional focus on other aspects of the curriculum, including the Westminster Seminar, the *Westminster Symposium*, the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum*, and the co-curricular program.
- c. To map the *DQP* to existing Westminster programs, including majors, and with college learning goals and student development goals.
- d. To find ways to use both formative and summative assessments in productive ways in discussions with students about their learning.

We hoped to find ways to enhance student learning of broad, integrative knowledge. In particular, our goals were to:

- a. Improve understanding of integrated learning by both faculty and students
- b. Improve teaching methods (with the broad, integrative focus being more intentional by faculty and more apparent to students)
- c. Improve assessment practices
- d. Create a greater shared understanding of the college mission and vision, as well as a greater shared understanding of the strategic college goals and the role that they play in student outcomes.

We also hoped that the *DQP* initiative would enrich the teaching and learning processes on our campus, specifically about broad, integrative knowledge, but also about the other learning goals in the *DQP* as well. Specifically, we hoped that the *DQP* initiative would:

- a. Inform us how and where and the degree to which broad, integrative knowledge is acquired and demonstrated in both curricular and co-curricular experiences
- b. Help us to develop and refine teaching and learning strategies
- c. Use findings to refine programming
- d. Provide feedback to Lumina on the conceptualization and language related to broad, integrative knowledge

B. Implementation of the Project and Results

1. Surveys of Students, Faculty, and Staff

Note: Portions of the scope of the project and results have been previously presented by Drs. Jones and Perry at the February, 2013 Meeting of Cohort #3 in St. Charles, IL and at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Higher Learning Commission in Chicago, IL.

The first project to be developed was a Survey of Teaching/Learning of Broad, Integrative Knowledge. The HLC Re-Accreditation Committee developed surveys for

faculty/staff and for students about where in the curriculum and co-curricular programs that “broad, integrative knowledge,” as defined by Lumina’s *Degree Qualifications Profile*, is being acquired by students. The purposes of the survey were to 1) determine where in the curriculum and co-curricular programs that faculty/staff were deliberately trying to facilitate learning of “broad, integrative knowledge” and where students were learning it and 2) to determine faculty, staff, and student understanding of the concept of “broad, integrative knowledge,” as defined by the *DQP*. All faculty, staff, and students were invited to participate in the survey in November, 2011. Two surveys were created: 1) a faculty/staff survey on “broad, integrative knowledge,” and 2) a student survey on “broad, integrative knowledge.”

The *DQP* definition of “broad, integrative knowledge” for the bachelor’s level is the following:

Broad, Integrative Knowledge

1. Frames a complex scientific, social, technological, economic or aesthetic challenge or problem from the perspectives and literature of at least two academic fields, and proposes a “best approach” to the question or challenge using evidence from those fields.
2. Produces, independently or collaboratively, an investigative, creative or practical work that draws on specific theories, tools and methods from at least two academic fields.
3. Explains a contemporary or recurring challenge or problem in science, the arts, society, human services, economic life or technology from the perspective of at least two academic fields, explains how the methods of inquiry and/or research in those disciplines can be brought to bear in addressing the challenge, judges the likelihood that the combination of disciplinary perspectives and methods would contribute to the resolution of the challenge, and justifies the importance of the challenge in a social or global context.

After a great deal of discussion, the HLC Re-Accreditation Committee found the definition of broad, integrative learning in the *DQP* to be somewhat obtuse and believed that faculty and students would have a difficult time understanding the definition. Thus, the committee decided to reframe the language somewhat to the following for the surveys:

This type of broad, integrative learning may take different forms, including activities such as:

1. Proposing a solution to a complex problem using evidence from at least two academic fields
2. Producing work that draws on methods of at least two academic fields.
3. Explaining and researching a contemporary problem from the perspective of at least two academic fields. (Note: this rewrite may have unintentionally removed the *DQP* stipulation that students need to also resolve the problem and evaluate whether it is a problem worthy of extended attention).

For students, the specific instructions on the survey were:

Understanding student learning will help us improve your college experience. Please take a moment and reflect on your time at Westminster College. Identify and briefly describe broad, integrative college experiences as they have occurred. Since the richness and depth of these experiences may accumulate over your four years as a college student, please identify any way(s) that you have engaged in broad, integrative learning during your years at Westminster College, for example: a specific class activity or assignment, an experience related to a college event such as *Symposium on Democracy (aka Westminster Symposium)*, *Undergraduate Scholars Forum*, *Leadership Conference*, or a work study / internship experience.

Of the Westminster student body, 39 first-year, 31 second-year, 63 third-year, and 23 fourth-year students (about 14% of the student body) participated. Though the sample size was somewhat disappointing, the committee judged that the responses were representative of the student body. Members of the HLC Re-Accreditation Committee analyzed and summarized the results. Results of the survey indicated that students are developing their “broad, integrative knowledge” during their four years at Westminster through both their academic courses and their co-curricular experiences, which was heartening news, as Westminster’s entire student development model assumes that this should be happening. Additionally, the results show a distinct developmental pattern, as freshman students did not generally report or show understanding of the development of “broad, integrative knowledge,” but upperclassmen show significantly deeper understanding and appreciation for the concept, largely due to the wide variety of experiences that they have used to develop and refine their knowledge, both through the curriculum and through co-curricular opportunities that they have had at Westminster.

More specific results are found in the table below:

Class	Most Important Findings
Freshmen	1) Very few described a true interdisciplinary assignment or experience. 2) Many did describe development of responsibility, sportsmanship, communication skills, and liberal learning, learning about different cultures from international students.
Sophomores	1) Reported more integrative assignments and incorporation of material from multiple courses. Integration of basic skills (e.g. writing, math) into courses. 2) Reported many integrative experiences: internships, interviews, service learning, demonstrating that integrative knowledge is not purely academic as the <i>DQP</i> definition seems to indicate.
Juniors	1) Deeper discussions of integration of course content across the curriculum. 2) Leadership opportunities (e.g. tutoring, fraternity) promote broad, integrative learning. 3) Work experiences are important for promoting broad, integrative learning.
Seniors	1) Engaged in very deep discussion of course content integration. 2) Indicated that integration of skills learned across four years in academic courses. 3) Leadership opportunities on campus promote the development of broad, integrative knowledge.

For faculty/staff, the specific instructions on the survey were:

"Please give us any examples of any assignments, activities, (curricular or co-curricular) that you feel help students develop these skills or require these skills to be demonstrated. This could be a specific class activity or assignment, an experience related to a college event such as *Symposium on Democracy, Undergraduate Scholars Forum, Leadership Conference*, a work study / internship experience, or something else entirely. Please indicate which of the above three forms the assignment takes and in which courses or other curricular or co-curricular activities these assignments/activities

occur. We'd love as much detail as possible, so feel free to send along an actual copy of any assignments or written description of the activity."

The committee received responses from 45 Westminster faculty members (75% of the faculty) and 30 staff members. Faculty reported teaching broad, integrative knowledge skills in Tier I (esp. Westminster Seminar), Tier II, and Tier III courses, and in major courses including, especially, capstone courses. Specific means of teaching broad, integrative knowledge included problem-based assignments, project-oriented assignments, simulations, and integrative papers and oral presentations. Faculty also reported a great deal of work with students in specialized courses, internships, research, service-learning, study abroad, undergraduate research, and preparation of students for the *Symposium* or the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum*. Staff reported a great deal of work with students developing broad, integrative knowledge in internships, student employment, mentoring/counseling, advising student groups, and helping students get ready for the *Westminster Symposium* and the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum*.

Thus, we found clear evidence that "broad, integrative knowledge," as generally defined by the Lumina *Degree Qualifications Profile*, is being taught and learned both throughout the Westminster academic curriculum and in co-curricular programming.

2. Tier III and Westminster Seminar Coursework

Probably the most important aspect of Westminster's Quality Initiative was the work with Tier III faculty. As mentioned earlier in this report, Tier III is part of Westminster's *New Foundations* general education program. It is composed of a single deliberately integrative course, in which students explore a particular topic from different disciplinary perspectives. In particular, Tier III courses of the general education curriculum, *New Foundations*, are designed to develop integrative knowledge and skills. *New Foundations* describes Tier III with the following language:

While the Contexts Tier (Tier II) allows students to explore the unique content and methodologies of various academic disciplines, there are subsequent needs to integrate disciplinary knowledge and to explore its relevance to contemporary issues and problems. Therefore, the General Education program requires a single course to be completed in the junior or senior year that draws together students from various disciplines for the sake of sharing their perspectives and discovering how an integrative approach can enrich understanding and facilitate solutions. Several courses will be offered annually. These courses require students to address contemporary issues and problems using a higher level of integrative and analytic skills than in previous general education courses. Further, integrative tier courses require students to share insights and conclusions about the issues at hand in research papers, essays, projects, and/or presentations.

Thus, it seemed to the HLC Re-Accreditation Committee that Tier III courses were an ideal place to both look for evidence of "broad, integrative knowledge" and to develop better teaching and learning methodologies. These courses provided the primary site for investigation of the *DQP* definition of "broad, integrative knowledge," though, as

detailed later in this report, Westminster explored the teaching and learning of “broad, integrative knowledge” in a variety of other contexts, including the Westminster Seminar course, in the *Westminster Symposium*, and in the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum*.

There are a total of 127 Westminster courses that have been approved by the faculty for Tier III status, according to the Fall, 2013 *Schedule of Classes*, and about 10-15 of these courses are taught every semester. Since the inception of *New Foundations* in 1996, though, Westminster faculty had never had the opportunity to jointly discuss how the vision for Tier III courses might be realized, so the Quality Initiative provided the institution with the unique opportunity to bring faculty together to brainstorm, given the relevance of the *DQP* definition of “broad, integrative knowledge” to Westminster’s Tier III courses.

At the beginning of the Fall, 2011 semester, we asked nine faculty members who were planning to teach a Tier III course in Spring, 2012 to volunteer for the QI project. Eventually, six faculty members participated. These faculty members were given the following instructions for the fall semester as well as for their Spring, 2012 Tier III course:

Participation includes regular meetings starting this semester, in addition to agreeing to a “project” for next semester’s WSM class. The project can be of each faculty member’s design, but should explore “broad, integrated knowledge” in some way; that is, faculty are encouraged to test the Lumina goals as stated, or redefine the goals in ways that they believe would enhance student learning. Faculty members are also asked to consider including some sort of reflection assignment connected to broad, integrated knowledge, in order to determine the extent to which metacognitive practices enhance this learning. A final piece that may work for a few Tier III classes is the presentation of a few of their students’ projects at the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum*. I doubt that many would be able to do so, but if it fits with the class, that would give us one additional means of measuring the learning. Design some sort of method to evaluate the learning as well as the methods for achieving the learning. I’ve attached the AAC&U (Association of American Colleges and Universities) rubric, which we may want to study as a model. ·

Goal: A report from each Tier III faculty member that discusses the following: (1) What assignments or activities did you use to develop broad, integrated learning and/or effectively utilize broad, integrated knowledge? What methods did you use to assess this learning? (2) To what extent did you find that your students were able to achieve broad, integrated learning and/or effectively utilize broad, integrated knowledge? (3) What is your assessment of the methods you used in order to help your students achieved this learning? (4) If your methods included reflective/metacognitive practices, how would you describe the effects of these practices? (5) Based on your experience, what are the strengths and limitations of this learning goal, either as defined by Lumina, or as you have redefined the goal? (6) To what extent do you believe the Lumina Foundation’s goals for broad, integrated knowledge (in their current form) are appropriate for undergraduate students?

Dr. Therese Miller, Associate Professor of Physical Education, spearheaded the meetings with Tier III faculty in the Fall, 2011 semester, joining with Dr. Jones and five additional members of the Tier III faculty for regular planning meetings during that semester. The participating faculty members were:

Dr. Victor Leuci – Teaching CLA 320 (Medicine, Miracles, and Magic)
Dr. Therese Miller – Teaching PED/WGS 355 (Women’s Health Issues)
Dr. Ryan Mullen – Teaching MAT 305 (Heart of Mathematics)
Dr. Maureen Tuthill – Teaching ENG 330 (Literature of the Great Depression)
Dr. Irene Unger – Teaching BIO/ENV 340 (Wetlands)
Dr. Michelle Vaughan – Teaching PSY 405 (International and Cross-Cultural Psychology)

During these meetings, the faculty discussed the definition of Tier III courses, the Lumina definition of “broad, integrative knowledge,” specific teaching techniques and assignments they were planning for their spring Tier III course, and methods of assessment, including the degree to which the AAC&U rubric for integrative knowledge might be relevant to measuring the development of “broad, integrative knowledge.” These were rich and fruitful discussions, and, again, allowed faculty to engage with each other about teaching and learning practices to a degree never before experienced at Westminster since the approval of *New Foundations*.

Following the Fall, 2011 planning sessions, the six Tier III faculty members initiated their projects in their Spring, 2012 courses. Projects varied from course to course but included journaling, writing, service learning, and oral presentations. Some faculty members incorporated aspects of the AAC&U rubric on integrative learning into their assessments, following discussion of the relevance of the rubric to the Lumina definition of “broad, integrative knowledge” and the Westminster Tier III course description. Faculty members met every month in the spring semester to discuss issues related to the implementation of their projects and to share ideas and advice. Specific projects included a wide variety of teaching and learning methodologies:

CLA 320: Use of guest lectures and readings to deepen students’ understanding of “healing”.

PED/WGS 355: There were three projects: 1) weekly journaling, 2) a multigenre midterm project, and 3) a service learning project.

MAT 305: Students worked in groups of two or three on a project which related mathematical techniques with any other subject (such as weather, art, decision making, finance, sports, and biology). The groups each wrote a paper and presented a poster (during finals week) describing their work.

ENG 330: In-class writing, participation on a panel that taught the class about a general topic on culture in the 1930’s (fashion, comics/superheroes, music, sports/recreation, or food) and a 3-page paper on the group topic, and a final project which was a study of a theme or a material aspect of the Great Depression that the student found meaningful that they felt needed further investigation (had to incorporate a study of some theme or material aspects of 1930’s American

culture, a literary analysis of at least three texts read in the course, creative use of supporting evidence to make the case that the topic was significant in some way during the Great Depression, and a personal assessment of how the specific approach to the project study enhanced a student's understanding of the Great Depression). Students completed a survey at the end of class on how well they felt that they had met the objectives of the project.

BIO/ENV 340: Creation of a "virtual field trip" to a particular wetland, reflections on the presentation of the "virtual field trip," presenting a fictional case to a "city council" to save wetlands, and reflections on how the arts affect perceptions of wetlands. Students completed a survey at the end of class on how well they felt that they had met the objectives of the project.

PSY 405: Journaling, including discussion and reflection on 1) aspects of culture(s) of origin and how they have influenced personal beliefs/values/attitudes, 2) new insights and understandings over the course of the semester about three aspects of one's culture on how they influenced personal beliefs, values, attitudes in comparison to others raised from a different culture, and 3) the readings provided on Swedish sex culture and the cultural and historical influences on Swedish values about sexuality, reflecting on how the personal story shared would be perceived within one's culture of origin regarding that culture's sex culture.

Results of the project were very positive. Surveys completed in three of the courses indicated that students felt that the teaching/learning techniques were very effective in helping them to 1) make connections across disciplines, 2) transfer and apply skills, abilities, and methodologies previously learned in one situation to new situations to solve difficult problems or to explore complex issues in original ways, and 3) integrate communication to enhance meaning. Interviews with the faculty members upon completion of the projects were also positive, as they expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the project and the chance to engage more carefully in thinking about how to teach students to develop "broad, integrative knowledge," and particularly about learning from other faculty members through the rich discussions that the group had over several months. It was clear from the faculty reports and discussions that there are a wide variety of teaching and learning techniques that can be used to promote the development of "broad, integrative knowledge," including traditional assignments such as writing, reading, and research projects, but also that encouraging students to reflect on their learning (e.g. metacognition) is particularly important. Additionally, for assessment purposes, faculty and staff must recognize that there are a wide variety of learning outcomes that demonstrate broad, integrative learning. We must allow this range in order for Westminster to maintain its distinct mission as it teaches agreed upon basic competencies. Thus, it is critical that faculty members should think very carefully about course design and the content of their course syllabi to ensure that focus on the development of "broad, integrative knowledge" is deliberately integrated into the course. Faculty members also agreed that the *DQP* definition of "broad, integrative knowledge," while useful, does not completely capture the way that students develop their knowledge. Finally, survey results and discussions with faculty members indicated that cognitive maturation is important for the ability to fully achieve the

development of “broad, integrative knowledge.” This might be best captured in a quote from a student in the “Women’s Health Issues” course:

As a freshman, I think I would have done very well on the multigenre project, but not as well with the journaling or service learning project. I did a multigenre project in my Intro to Women Studies course, and it turned out well. However, I wouldn’t have been as thoughtful – I don’t think I would have made the same kind of connections. I would have been fine with the service learning project, but I don’t think I would have been able to see the deeper meaning in what we did at CARDV (the service learning aspect of the course) when I was a freshman.

Three additional Tier III faculty members participated in the project in the Fall, 2012 semester. They were:

Dr. Rabi Bhandari – Teaching ECN 334 (Economic Development)
Dr. Cinnamon Brown – Teaching HIS 300 (American Slavery)
Dr. Cliff Cain – Teaching REL 305 and REL 324 (Perceptions of Death and Spiritual Ecology)

Also, in Fall, 2012, five faculty members teaching Westminster Seminar courses also participated in the QI project. Westminster Seminar is a course required of all first-year students (both freshmen – WSM 101 - and transfers – WSM 102) at Westminster and focuses on the development of student critical thinking, writing, speaking, study, and time management skills through course content that is unique to each section of the course. The faculty members participating were:

Dr. Linda Aulgur – Teaching WSM 101 (Searching for Happiness)
Dr. Cinnamon Brown – Teaching WSM 101 (The History of Carnival)
Dr. Susan Divine – Teaching WSM 101 (Hispanic Cities on Film)
Ms. Angela Gerling – Teaching WSM 102 (Transfer Student Seminar)
Dr. Irene Unger – Teaching WSM 101 (Spaceship Earth: A Voyage Into Sustainability)

As with the Fall 2011/Spring 2012 Tier III faculty members, the Fall, 2012 faculty members also met regularly to discuss the nature of “broad, integrative knowledge” and how they might approach the topic in their courses. The Westminster Seminar faculty members were added specifically to discuss how the general topic of “broad, integrative knowledge” might be introduced to new Westminster students, both freshmen and transfers, so that they could begin to learn and appreciate its importance in the Westminster curriculum and co-curriculum. Specific projects included the following:

Tier III Projects

ECN 334: Students did an economic analysis of a particular country and wrote a paper and did a presentation of their work. Students evaluated the social and political factors that have led to the country's present economic position.

HIS 300: Students wrote a research prospectus for a project about slavery.

REL 305: Students did a presentation to the class about a particular topic associated with death (e.g. living wills) and had to include interdisciplinary perspectives in the presentation.

REL 324: Students worked with environmental organizations in service learning projects and wrote a reflective paper, incorporating aspects of the "broad, integrative knowledge" definition into their papers.

WSM 101/102 Projects:

Searching for Happiness: Students were paired with third graders at McIntire Elementary School in Fulton to apply positive psychology concepts with the children and to write a class book on how kindness and happiness can be described to different individuals jointly with the children.

The History of Carnival: A CLA "performance task" (involves the use of original documents to address a particular question or problem) associated with the history of carnival.

Hispanic Cities on Film: Students viewed six films throughout the semester and wrote short papers where they were to do an analysis of a film focusing on how the director tied together varied concepts such as economy, politics, national history, gender, race, etc. through framing, lighting, music, and other film techniques. To prepare for the paper, students discussed about the issues presented in the film and also read about the "real" problems the film referenced as well as critiques of the films. Students then applied what they had learned into projects where they went to their hometowns and played the part of a "director" documenting or narrating a problem through a photo essay.

Transfer Student Seminar: Utilized readings, discussions, research for papers, and the Symposium sessions to work in small groups to design a new course for the Fundamental Questions context of Westminster's curriculum. It was a modified CLA performance task done in 3 groups of 4 -5 people in each group.

Spaceship Earth: A Voyage Into Sustainability: 1) Paper linked to the Symposium discussions on how religious beliefs affect one's beliefs about environmental issues. 2) CLA performance tasks focused around how a) religion affects environmental sustainability efforts, and b) the relationship between agriculture and sustainability, and 3) Reflective essays.

Results of the Fall, 2012 courses largely matched those of the Spring, 2012 group. Faculty members reported that it was extremely useful to discuss their courses with other faculty members and to creatively plan for activities that might promote "broad, integrative, knowledge." They also reported that the AAC&U rubric on integrative knowledge was useful for assessing student progress on the development of "broad, integrative knowledge." Students in the Westminster Seminar courses were at a

beginning level of development of understanding, as we expected from the earlier surveys, but faculty found that they could begin to engage them to develop the necessary skills in the course through creative assignments and connections to service learning, the *Westminster Symposium* etc. At the same time, student work and understanding of “broad, integrative knowledge” did not exactly match the specific definition offered by the *DQP* authors.

Overall, the work with Tier III and Westminster Seminar faculty members was a major success and largely helped us to achieve our goal “to develop and refine teaching and learning methods for better learning of “broad, integrative knowledge.”

3. Student Interaction with Board of Trustees Members and in the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum*

In order to help students prepare integrative projects for the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum* (a yearly opportunity for students to present the research and creative works that have done), and to bring Westminster’s Board of Trustees into the conversation on how “broad, integrative knowledge” is taught and learned at Westminster, students and Trustees met together at the February, 2012 Board of Trustees meeting at Westminster. The goals of this session were for trustees to study the students’ projects ahead of time, to listen to students present their work, and then to help the students engage in meaningful discussion about their projects. Specifically, the following pairings were made:

Ann Amenuvor, “Language and its Role in Decolonizing Africa”
Trustee: Heather Biehl
Faculty Sponsors: Sam Goodfellow and Heidi Lavine

Emily Grand, “Women in the French Revolution and Gothic Literature: Were They Sinners or Saints?”
Trustee: Jane Bell
Faculty Sponsor: Theresa Adams

Anna Holyan, “The Christianization of the Greco-Roman World”
Trustee: Ann Schneider
Faculty Sponsor: Bob Seelinger

Gaurav Khanal, “Reading Between the Lines: the Fed Model and its Discrepancies”
Trustee: Paul Davis
Faculty Sponsor: Rabi Bhandari

Andrew R. McHugh, “Technology and the Human Spirit”
Trustee: John Elrod
Faculty Sponsors: Rich Geenen and Jim McRae

Hannah Minchow-Proffitt and David Strawhun, “Microloan Financing: Growing Businesses and Friendships over 7,000 Miles Away”

Trustee: Linda Gill-Taylor

Faculty Sponsor: Bob Hansen

Mylhan Myers, “The American Presidency: An Examination of the Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb”

Trustee: Ron Kostich

Faculty Sponsor: Tobias Gibson

Pradipti Rajbhandari, “The Impact of Economic Freedom on the Overall Development Pattern in the High Remittance Recipients Country”

Trustee: Paul Davis

Faculty Sponsor: Rabi Bhandari

Brittney Regal, “Bolivia: Decolonization and Development”

Trustee: Hal Oakley

Faculty Sponsors: Sam Goodfellow and Susan Divine

Brian Waters, “National Identity in Sudan”

Trustee: Bruce Brookby

Faculty Sponsor: Kurt Jefferson

All students agreed to three conditions: (1) to select a project that they could complete in time to present at the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum* and that they believed drew on the principles of integrative knowledge; (2) to meet with Board of Trustees members to review a draft of their work; and (3) to engage in reflection exercises after the Board of Trustees meeting and again after presenting at the *Scholars Forum*.

Anna Holyan decided to withdraw from the project after the Board meeting. So in the end, nine student projects were completed.

The purpose of the Board session was to help students and Trustees to gain a deeper understanding of “broad, integrative knowledge” in order to help us define what the concept means to Westminster and to test the Lumina *DQP* definition. Engaging the Trustees allowed us to bring in professional, third-party persons who helped (1) refine our thinking about the project; (2) students to engage in an integrative learning process; and (3) students to refine their work for the *Scholars Forum*. At the same time, we hoped this experience might (1) build Board of Trustee commitment to and understanding of Westminster’s re-accreditation process; and (2) give students an opportunity to interact with Trustees and practice higher-order thinking and communication skills.

Overall, the session with the Trustees fulfilled the stated goals, to a greater or lesser extent. Trustees’ comments point to the value they perceived in the project and the quality of our students and faculty. They appreciated the opportunity to use their own backgrounds and expertise to help the students think about their projects in new ways, and they enjoyed learning from the students. Trustees universally asked that sessions like this one be a regular feature at Board meetings.

Students' responses to the session with the Trustees varied widely, but all students made some changes to their work based on the Trustees' comments. For example, Pradipti Rajbhandari realized that health care was a key indicator of a country's economic health—a factor she had omitted from her study of Nepal's economy—and incorporated that factor into her final project. Emily Grand's discussion with Trustee Jane Bell demonstrated to her the benefit of expanding her paper on 18th century gothic novels to include contemporary works, and in the end she completely revised her paper for the *Scholars Forum*. Andrew McHugh realized the importance of tailoring his talk to a general audience, and Mylhan Myers claimed his discussion with Trustee Ron Kostich helped him improve his presentation skills. Brittney Regal had not considered opposing views until she discussed her paper with Trustee Hal Oakley, and David Strawhun and Hannah Minchow-Proffitt claimed that the discussion with Trustee Linda Gill-Taylor helped them see how they could apply their knowledge of microloans to new situations.

All of the students also commented on the value of integrative knowledge, but their expressions of such knowledge corresponded very little to the definition in the Lumina *DQP*. Instead, students talked about how knowledge gained from co-curricular experiences, field trips, off-campus programs or academic conferences, or additional coursework shaped their thinking. They saw their work as interdisciplinary and synthesized concepts and source material from a variety of disciplines, but they rarely explained the theories and practices of the various disciplines or tried to synthesize them. They talked about the importance of gathering ideas to improve not just the content of their papers and presentations but also to improve the delivery of them. In the end, all students felt that they gained skills that not only helped with their *Scholars Forum* presentations but that would also help with future academic work—in particular, with respect to understanding multiple points of view, synthesizing various points of view, understanding how various learning experiences (both inside and outside of the classroom) can benefit each other, and gaining communication and presentation skills.

During the *Scholars Forum*, Drs. Guinee and Perry observed the presentations of most of the students participating and read the papers of those they could not observe due to time constraints. They found that the presentations included little evidence of the Lumina *DQP* learning outcomes for the associate level or the bachelor's level with respect to “broad, integrative knowledge.” The papers provided some more evidence of a lack of link between the work and the Lumina definition. This may well be because most Westminster faculty approach the development of “broad, integrative knowledge” through assignments that don't strictly adhere to the definition proposed in the *DQP*.

However, we found a strong correlation between Westminster students' understanding of “broad, integrative knowledge” and the AAC&U “Integrative Learning VALUE Rubric.” This rubric sets as the “capstone” level features that were highly evident in this group of students. For example, the rubric focuses on “Connections to Experience,” and sets the following as the goal for undergraduate students: “Meaningfully synthesizes connections among experiences outside the formal classroom (including life experiences and academic experiences such as internships and study abroad) to deepen understanding of fields of study and to broaden own points of view.” We could cite numerous examples of this feature in the students' work. Second, the VALUE rubric points to “Connections to Discipline” as the next goal: “Independently creates wholes out of multiple parts (synthesizes) or draws conclusions by combining

examples, facts, or theories from more than one field or study or perspective; all students in the study included this feature in their papers or presentations. The third item in the rubric is “Transfer,” meaning that the student “adapts and applies, independently, skills, abilities, theories, or methodologies gained in one situation to new situations to solve difficult problems or explore complex issues in original ways.” At least half of the students in the study did so in a sophisticated way; others made at least some attempt to do so. The fourth VALUE item is “Integrated Communication,” which expects that a student “fulfills the assignment(s) by choosing a format, language, or graph (or other visual representation) in ways that enhance meaning, making clear the interdependence of language and meaning, thought, and expression.” All students seemed very interested in how working with the Trustees and preparing for the *Scholars Forum* forced them to think about presentation skills, and it seems that all made an effort to choose the most effective presentation style possible. Finally, the rubric points to “Reflection and Self-Assessment” by asserting that the student “envisions a future self (and possibly makes plans that build on past experiences that have occurred across multiple and diverse contexts).” Given that we did not direct students toward this type of self-assessment, we did not see this item consistently; however, students made a surprising number of comments that point to future application of what they had learned.

Reviewing the Lumina criteria using the questions we posed, we found that students undoubtedly *could* achieve in the area of “broad, integrative knowledge” at the associate’s level, and many could achieve at the bachelor’s level. Each of the ten projects was relatively sophisticated in thought, integration of knowledge, use of sources, and presentation of information. However, typical paper or project assignments simply do not ask students to take on the very specific tasks Lumina suggests. Therefore, it is very difficult to measure students’ abilities using the *DQP* definitions, unless we design assignments based more specifically on the Lumina criteria. While the Trustees provided solid feedback and different points of view to the students, and it is obvious that students incorporated these different perspectives in the learning process, this does not necessarily mean that the students came to understand “broad, integrative knowledge” through the process. They may have simply considered new viewpoints, which is part of such a broad, integrative *learning* process, but not come up with “new ways” to understand broad, integrative *knowledge*. This is probably why the students’ comments on their work with the trustees did correspond well with the definition found in the Lumina document. This suggests that Westminster must consider differences between learning processes and the achievement of knowledge and further suggests that there may be some confusion in the *DQP* definition of “broad, integrative knowledge” between learning and knowledge. Learning is a process and knowledge is an outcome.

4. Mapping the *DQP* to Westminster Courses and the Co-Curriculum

All Westminster academic departments and parts of Student Life were asked to map their programs to the entirety of Lumina’s *DQP* so that Westminster could determine the fit of the entire *DQP* to the institution’s teaching and learning processes. The departments were asked to indicate the specific courses or activities that map to the *DQP* learning goals, which department learning goals match the *DQP* ones, and specific

assignments that the departments use to measure the achievement of the goals. The following academic departments completed this work:

Classics, Religion, and Philosophy
Education
English
Foreign Languages and Literature
History
International and Transnational Studies
Mathematics and Physics
Psychology

Additionally, the Center for Career Development and Internships and Leadership Studies (both part of Student Life) completed a mapping of programming to Lumina's *DQP*. Although all academic departments (there are a total of 15 academic departments at Westminster) did not complete the mapping, enough did so to enable some general conclusions:

1. All skill areas discussed in the *DQP* (specialized knowledge; broad, integrative knowledge; intellectual skills; applied learning; and civic learning) are taught at various places in the Westminster curriculum. Not all departments teach all of the skills listed in the *DQP*, though, so students' complete exposure to *DQP* criteria will be dependent on which major(s) they have.
2. The *DQP* learning goals map well to department learning goals. Departments reported that they could fairly easily see the connections between *DQP* learning goals and their own.
3. Departments reported that the major methods of assessment of these goals are through exams, papers, and research projects.
4. Departments reported the most amount of attention to the *DQP* area of "specialized knowledge," reporting the development of those skills in most courses. The development of "broad, integrative knowledge" was reported in a wide variety of courses, particularly upper-level courses. The development of intellectual skills were also reported in a wide variety of courses, particularly analytic inquiry and use of information resources. Efforts to engage students in diverse perspectives, quantitative fluency, and communication fluency were reported less frequently by departments, and no department other than foreign languages and literature reported any attempt to "In a language other than English, and either orally or in writing, conducts an inquiry with a non-English-language source concerning information, conditions, technologies and/or practices in his or her major field." Applied learning was reported by some departments, but not all. The *DQP* area that academic departments reported least addressed was civic learning, particularly "develops and justifies a position on a public issue and related the position taken to alternative views with the community/policy environment" and "collaborates with others in developing and implementing an approach to a

civic issue, evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the process, and, where applicable, the result.”

5. Students additionally develop the specific skills listed in #4 above through leadership programming and internships at Westminster. This appears to be a failing of the *DQP*, which focuses on the development of specific skills specifically through academic content and does not acknowledge that students also develop these skills through co-curricular programming.

Part II: Most Important Findings

Once again, the goals that the HLC Re-Accreditation Committee hoped that Westminster would meet through participating in the Quality Initiative process were the following:

- a. Inform us how and where and the degree to which broad, integrative knowledge is acquired and demonstrated in both curricular and co-curricular experiences
- b. Help us to develop and refine teaching and learning strategies
- c. Use findings to refine programming
- d. Provide feedback to Lumina on the conceptualization and language related to broad, integrative knowledge

We believe that the initiative has provided us with all of the above.

First of all, we found that “broad, integrative knowledge” is clearly being taught and learned at all stages of the Westminster curriculum and co-curriculum, beginning in the student’s first-year in their Westminster Seminar and other first-year courses and continuing through Tier II and III courses and through major courses. Additionally, course mappings done by some academic departments showed that other aspects of the *DQP* are being taught and learned throughout the Westminster curriculum, though students are exposed to different skills to different degrees depending on what their major is. Perhaps most importantly, we found that students are also acquiring “broad, integrative knowledge” and other *DQP* skills through various aspects of the co-curriculum, including internships, service learning, leadership opportunities in clubs and organizations etc. This is an important point, as the *DQP* definitions of various skills seems to focus specifically on development via only academic courses.

The project was perhaps most helpful in providing Westminster faculty members opportunities to develop and refine teaching and learning strategies and to use findings to refine programming. As mentioned above, the project provided Westminster faculty members a chance to work collaboratively in thinking about course objectives and designing courses and assignments in a way that had been envisioned when *New Foundations* was adopted but had never been implemented. At the end of the project, in November, 2012, approximately twenty-five faculty gathered for an evening meal and workshop discussion of the results of the Quality Initiative Project on the teaching and learning of “broad, integrative knowledge.” Those who had participated in teaching the above courses (both Tier III and Westminster Seminar faculty) spoke about their projects and what they have learned from them. At the meeting, faculty who were not able to be

part of the project were able to learn from those who had, and faculty expressed a desire to see assignments and course syllabi from those involved so that they could learn from them. Going forward, Westminster will endeavor to find ways to provide that information and continuing opportunities for faculty to engage in the kinds of rich discussions that we were able to have as a result of the QI project.

Third, we have realized that the development of “broad, integrative knowledge” requires both cognitive maturation and a particular commitment by teachers to articulate the broad, integrative nature of teaching and learning and to encourage reflection (metacognition) of how students are acquiring these skills.

“There seems to be a ‘cognitive maturation’ process during their college experience: underclassmen seem to focus more on receiving information, memorizing information. As they grow, they learn a different approach to study and preparing for class, they can delve into class subject deeper and find enjoyment out of critically analyzing current issues. Upperclassmen seem more confident to raise questions in class. As a result, they are mature enough to appreciate the reality of the issues at hand able to apply their knowledge to solve problems.” - Dr. Therese Miller (Women’s Health Issues).

Faculty members can encourage this development through their course design, specifically by encouraging activities that require students to synthesize information from previous courses and other learning experiences and to connect their learning with “real-world” learning such as service learning and internships. For a number of years, Westminster faculty and staff have been encouraged to help their students to engage in “deep learning,” and it appears that faculty and staff have taken that to heart and are finding numerous creative ways to make that happen. At the same time, we must remember that this kind of learning is a process and that it does not necessarily lead to the achievement of “broad, integrative knowledge.” It will be important for faculty and staff to incorporate the necessary assessments to measure achievement of the desired outcomes.

To that end, we discovered that the AAC&U rubric for integrated learning to be potentially quite useful for assessment purposes. As mentioned earlier in this report, one of our original goals for the QI project was to “find ways to use both formative and summative assessments in productive ways in discussions with students about their learning.” Going forward, particularly with the implementation of an e-portfolio system for students beginning their work at Westminster in Fall, 2013, it will be important to use rubrics such as the AAC&U rubrics to assess student work both to assess overall growth in skill development but also to engage with them in the kinds of conversations a few students had with Trustees to encourage formative assessment and growth.

Part III: Recommendations to the Lumina Foundation

Westminster College has thoroughly evaluated the Lumina Foundation’s *Degree Qualifications Profile*, particularly the area of “broad, integrative knowledge.” In general, we find the *DQP* to be a fine document and commend the authors for their diligent work in thinking carefully about skills that students should obtain at different

levels of higher education (associates, bachelors, and masters). The document is extremely helpful in engaging faculty members and those engaged in the co-curriculum in discussions about “what matters” in higher education and teaching and learning strategies that engage students and help them to achieve these skills. The general skills envisioned by the authors for the bachelor’s degree level are relevant, and, in fact, are being taught and learned across the Westminster College curriculum and co-curriculum. They fit well with liberal learning and a liberal arts curriculum.

At the same time, we find that the specific definitions for various skills offered by the authors of the *DQP* are too specific and obtuse in many cases and don’t adequately reflect the kinds of assignments and activities that students complete during their education. Dr. Guinee wrote the following after reviewing how Westminster students meet the *DQP* criteria when showcasing their work in the *Undergraduate Scholars Forum*:

I believe that the Lumina criteria consist of a kind of artificial scholarship – they are not native to normal scholarly work. This does not necessarily condemn their use. If the goals of this artificial endeavor were clearly delimited, then it might make sense to step outside of normal scholarly work to pursue them. We would need to create additional pedagogies and would need to develop a method of assessing this among students. This method would need to be artificial as well; we could not expect to find these matters in normal student papers or presentations. Rather, we would need to have students write, or perhaps interview students specifically on this topic. Alternatively, we could refocus this goal to something much more consonant with the rest of their education. For example, we could easily focus on student abilities to assess complex questions with data from different domains and an indeterminate answer. Such a focus would rely on current learning stage theories. At present, and until the goals of the current criteria are clearly specified, I favor this direction.

As mentioned earlier, we initially found the *DQP* definition of “broad, integrative knowledge” to be too complicated and obtuse for faculty and students to understand and appreciate. Thus, we simplified the definition and would encourage the *DQP* authors to do the same.

Of extreme importance, we recommend that the *DQP* authors incorporate our finding that “broad, integrative knowledge,” specifically, are being taught and learned in co-curricular settings in addition to academic courses, as are all the *DQP* skills. The results from our surveys, our mapping exercises, and student feedback from their work in our Tier III and Westminster Seminar courses, as well as their work with Westminster’s *Undergraduate Scholars Forum* all point to how holistic and naturally integrative higher education actually is. To us, that was a welcome finding, as Westminster clearly does emphasize the importance of holistic learning in its mission and planning documents. Our discussions of the *DQP*, however, indicated that the authors did not specifically take the nature of holistic learning into account in writing their definitions of specific skills they argued that students should achieve at the bachelor’s degree level. As Dean Perry said in our interview with HLC personnel:

I'd say another thing that we learned is that the *DQP* is focused a lot on academics. We're approaching education holistically, but, there's not as much in the *DQP* related to the co-curricular aspect of things. And, I think as we went through this project we discovered that students, as they thought about integrative knowledge, were bringing in a lot of their co-curricular experiences, such as service learning and internships that they did and all of these sorts of things that students do, even participating on athletic teams, which really isn't captured well by the *DQP*. But we discovered that a lot of the integration that students were doing in terms of the kinds of skills came from those co-curricular experiences. So that was eye-opening to us, as well.

Finally, Westminster College strongly encourages the Lumina Foundation and the Higher Learning Commission to recommend the use of the *Degree Qualifications Profile* as a **tool** to enable discussion of appropriate skills that students should be acquiring at the associate's, bachelor's, and master's level rather than as a prescription for higher education. As we engaged with the *DQP*, we were encouraged that the document largely matches, at least in general terms, with Westminster's mission as a baccalaureate, liberal arts institution. At the same time, we came to appreciate, particularly in discussions that we had with other institutions at the HLC Cohort #3 meetings, that there is a rich diversity of institutional missions and that diversity is a strength of, and not a problem with, American higher education. As we engaged with representatives of the Lumina Foundation, we were discouraged to learn that Lumina envisions the *DQP* as akin to a national curriculum. We strongly feel that would be an enormous mistake. We can envision how institutions might use the document to engage their constituencies in rich discussions about what matters in learning and how to accomplish that. And, we can envision that institutions offering different degree levels might use the document to engage in discussions of partnerships and how to prepare students for the next level. But, we strongly feel that the *DQP* should be viewed as a helpful tool to facilitate those discussions, not a mandated national curricular prescription.