I. Rationale for the changes

Our current system of University Student Learning Outcomes was an excellent start to revitalizing our assessment process but unfortunately no longer fits well with various assessment mandates. SACS/COC requires a specifically identified set of learning outcomes for each institution’s general education core and the switch to the LAC provides a perfect opportunity to address this missing element. Other actions by the UNC General Administration and UNC Asheville Faculty Senate also require some rethinking of the outcomes we assess in major programs. Taken together, these changes suggest a new paradigm for identifying and aligning student learning outcomes.

1. Discontinue the superordinate level of University Student Learning Outcomes
2. Replace it with the required set of General Education Outcomes
3. And a set of common major program outcomes

This particular paradigm actually is quite common among colleges and universities, more common, in fact, than a single superordinate level. This draft presents our preliminary conceptualization of the new system. We need your help to develop a final version.

II. Next steps

LAC outcomes
We have tried to identify the program elements which appear to align with each of the 5 proposed LAC outcomes. We need help from the various LAC coordinators to complete the list of which outcomes apply to and should be assessed in each LAC component.

Major program outcomes
We have used a bit of common sense and the requirements of GA and Faculty Senate mandates to develop the 5 common major program outcomes. With the exception of Critical Thinking all of them already are being assessed in some way by each major program and we have listed those existing assessments along with the outcomes. Programs are free to add additional outcomes but we encourage faculty instead to think about developing multiple assessments within each outcome. For example, the Knowledge of major or area of study could involve one assessment of content knowledge, another assessment of skills, etc.

Note: Descriptions of outcomes are reprinted from AACU rubrics developed through the LEAP initiative with the exception of Interdisciplinary Knowledge which is reprinted from NC State’s outcomes, and Knowledge of major or area of study, our own first effort at a description.

III. How the paradigm might be described/delineated

A. Introductory statement on student learning

UNC Asheville students participate in curricular, co-curricular and community learning environments characterized by exemplary teaching, innovative scholarship, creative expression, undergraduate research, engaged service, and practical experience. Our mission statement and strategic plan make clear our commitment to cultivating an appreciation of lifelong learning and ethical reasoning, as well as the value of
civic engagement and the practice of sustainability.

B. Liberal Arts Core Outcomes (our general education outcomes¹)

1. Critical Thinking
Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.
Applies to/assessed in: lab science requirement, senior colloquium, diversity intensive, foreign language requirement (via national standardized exam)

2. Written Communication
Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images.
Applies to/assessed in: freshman colloquium, lab science requirement, senior colloquium, foreign language requirement (via national standardized exam)

3. Interdisciplinary Perspectives
Distinguish between the distinct approaches of two or more disciplines; identify and apply authentic connections between two or more disciplines; and explore and synthesize the approaches or views of the two or more disciplines.
Applies to/assessed in: Humanities, freshman colloquium, senior colloquium

4. Intercultural Knowledge
A set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.
Applies to/assessed in: foreign language requirement, diversity intensive requirement, ARTS requirement

5. Scientific and Quantitative Reasoning
A “habit of mind”, competency and comfort in working with numerical data and scientific concepts. The ability to reason and solve quantitative problems from a wide array of authentic contexts and everyday life situations.
Applies to/assessed in: natural science and social science requirements

¹ Note: The mapping of LAC components to outcomes is based on historical information from examining TracDat assessment plans. Updating is needed.

C. Major Program Outcomes (our major program outcomes)

1. Knowledge of a discipline or area of study
A set of contents, skills, methodologies, etc identified as the core elements of each major program.
Existing assessment: major competency with a small tweak—because all students must achieve major competency in order to be graduated, the assessment will need a small modification to permit recording the proportion of students whose performance is average (competency), above average and excellent/superior
2. **Critical Thinking** (also an LAC outcome)
   Critical thinking is a habit of mind characterized by the comprehensive exploration of issues, ideas, artifacts, and events before accepting or formulating an opinion or conclusion.

   *No existing assessment at present time, but one is needed for GA reporting*—should include an opportunity to record the proportion of students whose performance is average, above average and excellent/superior

3. **Written Communication** (also an LAC outcome)
   Written communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing. Written communication involves learning to work in many genres and styles. It can involve working with many different writing technologies, and mixing texts, data, and images.

   *Existing assessment:* Senate-required assessment of writing in the major which should include an opportunity to record the proportion of students whose performance is average, above average and excellent/superior

4. **Oral Communication**
   Oral communication is a prepared, purposeful presentation designed to increase knowledge, to foster understanding, or to promote change in the listeners’ attitudes, values, beliefs, or behaviors.

   *Existing assessment:* oral competency with a small tweak—because all students must achieve major competency in order to be graduated, the assessment will need a small modification to permit recording the proportion of students whose performance is average (competency), above average and excellent/superior

5. **Information Literacy**
   The ability to know when there is a need for information, to be able to identify, locate, evaluate, and effectively and responsibly use and share that information for the problem at hand.

   *Existing assessment:* Senate-required assessment of information literacy which should include an opportunity to record the proportion of students whose performance is average, above average and excellent/superior