Twelve undergraduate student learning outcomes guide achievement assessment in the Core Curriculum. These include general knowledge content areas, intellectual skills, personal and social values, and interdisciplinary and co-curricular integration. In the current cycle, faculty teams have assessed lower division written communication, second language proficiency, and critical thinking.

To assess written communication, a random sample of student papers were collected from the lower division English 121 sections during a two-year period (2010-2011). English 121 is our core requirement for the writing competency. A faculty team adapted the AAC&U Value Rubric for Written Communication to include an assessment of diversity, an additional course requirement. Student results were as predicted with the majority scoring at the expected range for first/second-year students. Faculty concluded that assignments should be reexamined for integration of diversity themes as a targeted area for improvement. This next year, student papers from upper division writing courses across the curriculum will be assessed along with a sample from the lower division English 121 courses.

Second language proficiency was assessed in two of three major programs: Spanish and French. Students’ immediacy (speaking and listening) skills were assessed using Oral Proficiency Interviews by Computer (OPIC) provided by the ACTFL Language Testing office. Recursive (reading and writing) scores were obtained using ACTFL standards and testing procedures. Results indicated that students scored generally at acceptable levels but that these could be improved with more practice time and contact hours. The department has recommended considering the feasibility of increasing units from 3 to 4.

We have piloted several methods of critical thinking. Two tests, the California Critical Thinking Skills Test (CCTST) and the Critical-thinking Assessment Test (CAT) were used to assess critical thinking skills in several first-year preceptorial courses. Scores were generally above average using both instruments; however, the faculty assessment team evaluating each measure believed that the tests were targeting different types of skills apparent in different disciplines. It was concluded that objective tests are difficult to use as general measures because of the difficulty in tying these directly to the curriculum. As a result, this next year, pilot studies of critical thinking at first-year and capstone levels will be assessed using embedded learning outcomes, assignments, and assessments.