

April 23, 2008

To: St. Olaf Faculty
From: Curriculum Committee
Re: Intended Learning Outcomes for SPM

At the May Faculty Meeting the Curriculum Committee will move that the faculty approve revised "Intended Learning Outcomes" for the General Education Requirement for Studies in Physical Movement (SPM).

Description:

[the description and guidelines for the SPM requirement, presented here for context, are not part of the motion]

Studies in Physical Movement: Two courses, of any credit value, each focused on a different activity or mode of movement, that expand students' experiences in and understanding of movement and promote lifelong health and wellness of the whole person.

Guidelines for courses:

1. Courses must introduce and develop a physical technique by engaging students in physical movement.
2. Courses must include a cognitive component where students learn about moving.
3. Courses must provide information about lifelong health and wellness of the whole person.
4. Courses must provide historical and cultural background relevant to the activity, illustrating the wide range of roles of physical activity in human development.

Intended learning outcomes for students:

[the following outcomes are the subject of the motion]

Students will demonstrate:

1. the ability to successfully perform a range of skills connected to a given physical technique;
2. knowledge of the body's structure, function, and expression specifically in the performance of a given physical technique and broadly in creating long-term well being;
3. awareness of their own feelings, values, and attitudes regarding movement and long-term well being; and
4. awareness of the historical and cultural background of a given physical technique.

Rationale:

The proposed learning outcomes will replace outcomes adopted in October 2005, at the very outset of the effort to state learning outcomes for general education requirements. The present statement benefits from subsequent reflection on the whole process of stating learning outcomes. The present statement is clearer and more closely aligned with the guidelines. Faculty who offer SPM courses, members of the Assessment Subcommittee of the Curriculum Committee, and others have contributed to the present statement.

“Technique,” as used in the guidelines and outcomes, refers to ensembles of structured or improvised physical movements, techniques, and skills that constitute intentional athletic or aesthetic physical activities. These are physical techniques whose goals are contained in the practice of the techniques themselves (for example, as expression, or competition, or increasing physical proficiency, or increasing self-awareness gained through movement). These are distinct from techniques where proficiency is sought primarily for the sake of some other external goal. Moreover, these are techniques whose practice has a bearing on lifelong health and wellness. Sport, dance, and physical fitness are examples of these, but many more examples could be imagined, and they might be offered in many departments.

The “knowledge” referred to in outcome 2 involves both cognitive, propositional, fact-based knowledge about the body’s structure, functioning, and expression in physical activity, and also embodied, immediate knowledge of the experience of engaging in such activities.

If adopted, this motion would represent a significant milestone. In the last four years, beginning with the work of a task force charged by the dean of the college, the faculty have undertaken a review of our general education curriculum. With the adoption of this motion, all revisions to General Education requirements undertaken as part of that review, including statements of intended learning outcomes for students, will have been completed. They will be presented in the forthcoming catalogue of the college. And they will be required for students who enter the college beginning fall, 2008.