

# Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

## Bachelor of Arts – Liberal Arts

**College: Arts and Sciences**

**Prepared by: Francene J Lemoine**

**Date: June 8, 2022**

**Approved by: Greg Handel, Provost**

**Date: June 9, 2022**

**Northwestern Mission.** Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

**College of Arts and Sciences' Mission.** College of Arts and Sciences' Mission. The College of Arts & Sciences, the largest college at Northwestern State University, is a diverse community of scholars, teachers, and students, working collaboratively to acquire, create, and disseminate knowledge through transformational, high-impact experiential learning practices, research, and service. The College strives to produce graduates who are productive members of society equipped with the capability to promote economic and social development and improve the overall quality of life in the region. The College provides an unequalled undergraduate education in the social and behavioral sciences, English, communication, journalism, media arts, biological and physical sciences, and the creative and performing arts, and at the graduate level in the creative and performing arts, English, TESOL, and Homeland Security. Uniquely, the College houses the Louisiana Scholars' College (the State's designated Honors College), the Louisiana Folklife Center, and the Creole Center, demonstrating its commitment to community service, research, and preservation of Louisiana's precious resources.

**Purpose:** This is the sixth year for this program to be assessed as part of the University assessment program. Previously, the program fell under the Louisiana Scholars' College for assessment. Students who wished to withdraw from the Scholars' College were allowed to transition seamlessly into the University's BA in Liberal Arts program. It was not until the 2017-2018 academic year that data collection and analysis commenced specifically for this degree program.

Students seeking a degree in the University's Liberal Arts program must complete 68 of the required 120 semester hours of Liberal Arts curriculum as follows:

- 15 semester hours of courses at the 1000 and 2000 level from the College of Arts and Sciences
- 27 semester hours of courses at the 3000 and 4000 level from the College of Arts and Sciences or from a concentration area
- 26 semester hours selected from a concentration area or from courses within the College of Arts and Sciences

## Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

The program of study leads to critical thinking skills, information gathering and analysis, and communication skills in the following areas:

1. Students will take responsibility for developing and implementing an integrated (multidisciplinary) independent curriculum at the university level.
2. Students will develop skills in critical thinking through information collection/analysis that may include library, electronic, survey, field, and studio and laboratory research methodologies as appropriate for their program of studies.
3. Students will develop written communication skills.

**Methodology:** The assessment process for the BA in Liberal Arts program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative, and qualitative) are collected and returned to the student's advisor and then to the College Dean.
- (2) The advisor and Dean will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes.
- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed between the advisor and Dean.
- (4) Individual meetings will be held with faculty teaching core courses (show cause).
- (5) The advisor, in consultation with the Dean, will propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and, where needed, curricula and program changes.
- (6) The Program of Study is designed in collaboration with an advisor and serves as the official document that guides selection of courses.
- (7) The Degree Completion Plan serves as a semester by semester plan for the student and serves as a guide to registration each semester. The student will meet with their academic advisor at least once each semester.
- (8) The resume is a professional document written by the student in their IDS4020 course. It is composed after dialog and assistance from the course instructor and becomes a part of their career portfolio assignment.
- (9) The cover letter is a professional document written by the student in their IDS4020 course. It is composed after dialog and assistance from the course instructor and becomes a part of their career portfolio assignment.
- (10) The discussion boards require reflective, critical thinking and act as prompts for larger assignments in the student's IDS4020/4030 courses. The student is required to view other students' posts and provide their posts for other students to view and evaluate. It requires independent and critical thinking.
- (11) The final reflective essay is a document written by the student at the end of their IDS4030 course. It requires that students reflect on and discuss their capstone and undergraduate experience.
- (12) A random sampling of documents will be completed each semester.

### Student Learning Outcomes:

**SLO 1. Students will design, develop, and implement a program of study including a degree completion plan by semester. This plan will show both disciplinary (minor**

## Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

or concentration) courses and inter/multi-disciplinary connections within the COAS. The student will articulate their goals in designing their Program of Study and Degree Completion Plan.

### Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge):

**Description:** Students will demonstrate an understanding of their degree program and how to most efficiently earn their degree by completing the following:

- Program of Study – upon initial matriculation into the program
- Degree Completion Plan – upon initial matriculation into the program

**Acceptable Target:** Ninety percent (90%) of students will pass the assessments with a score of at least 5 (as described in the attached rubric).

**Ideal Target:** All (100%) students will pass the assessments with a score of at least 5 (as described in the attached rubric).

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** Each semester

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Advisor and Dean

**Finding:** Target Not Met

**Analysis:** In AC 2020-2021, the target was met with 95% of assessed students successfully completing the Program of Study, Degree Completion Plan, and Written Statement of Purpose to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. This academic year marked the second year that advising for this program was moved to the University's Academic Advising Center, and we are seeing strong, positive results. Student/academic advisor engagement, as demonstrated by number of interactions, was increased with 28 students communicating (face-to-face or virtually) with their academic advisor 216 times during the academic year. Based on this positive shift, it was determined that academic advisors monitored student/advisor interactions or sessions and work more closely with the students as they develop their Degree Completion Plans to outline their completion to degree.

As a result of these changes which were implemented in AC 2021-2022, the target was not met with 81.8% (9/11) of assessed students successfully completing the Program of Study and Degree Completion Plan to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. Student/academic advisor engagement, as demonstrated by number of interactions, was increased with the 11 students communicating (face-to-face or virtually) with their academic advisor a total of 235 times during the academic year.

**Decision:** In AC 2020-2021, the target was met. Based on the analysis of those assessment results, in AC 2021-2022, academic advisors monitored student/advisor interactions or sessions. Those efforts resulted in the target not being met for the AC 2021-2022. For the AC 2022-2023, the following will be implemented to drive the cycle

## Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

of improvement. The focus will shift from the student's degree completion plan to the student's career plans. Therefore, the SLO will be changed to "Students will identify potential career opportunities". This SLO will be measured in three different ways: (1) Students enrolled in IDS 4030 will identify relevant career networking agencies. This will be assessed in a class assignment with an established grading rubric. The target will be to have 85% of the students score 80% or higher on the assignment. (2) Students enrolled in IDS 4030 will complete an informational interview assignment relevant to their career interests. The target will be to have 85% of the students score 80% or higher on the assignment assessed with an established grading rubric. (3) Students enrolled in IDS 4020 will complete a mock interview assignment in which each student is paired up with a classmate with a similar career interest. The students will coach each other through mock interviews taking turns in the role of interviewer and interviewee. The target will be to have 90% of the students score 80% or higher on the assignment assessed using an established rubric.

**SLO 2: Students will analyze, apply, and illustrate their ability to integrate skills including, but not limited to: library usage, electronic resource engagement, field experiences, and data and research collection through laboratory and field-based research. (Critical thinking skills)**

**Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill / Ability):**

**Description:** Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by completing a discussion board posts and a Final Reflective Essay in which they synthesize (utilize critical thinking skills) the experiences and lessons learned during their capstone courses and their entire undergraduate education. Students are evaluated on the language, appearance, and content of the compositions.

**Acceptable Target:** Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce discussion board posts and one hundred percent (100%) of students will produce a Final Reflective Essay that earns a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

**Ideal Target:** All (100%) students will pass the assessments with a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** Each semester

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Instructor of IDS 4020/4030 and Dean

**Finding:** Target not met.

**Analysis:** In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met with 2/7 (28%) the students earning a cumulative discussion board postings score of at least 80% and 3/7 (42%) students synthesizing a Final Reflective Essay that scored at least 80%. This was the first time that faculty began offering Liberal Arts majors two new courses: IDS 4020

## Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

(Perspectives/Senior Seminar) and IDS 4030 (Career Readiness/Senior Seminar). These courses, which encompass the experiential learning component of the BA in Liberal Arts degree help students transition from student to professional by assisting them with further developing their critical thinking skills. The creation of writing samples in these courses (discussion board postings and the Final Reflective Essay) were used to assess students' critical thinking skills.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2021-2022, the target was not met with 8/10 (80%) of the students earning a cumulative discussion board postings score of at least 80% and 8/10 (80%) of the students synthesizing a Final Reflective Essay that scored at least 80%.

**Decision:** In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of these AC 2020-2021 results, for AC 2021-2022, the IDS 4020/4030 instructors provided additional instructions for the Final Reflective Essay with the addition of prompts in the form of questions to help ensure that students are responding to and reflecting on all aspects of the discussion prompt. While these changes did result in improvement from the previous AC, the target was still not met. For the AC 2022-2023, the following will be implemented to drive the cycle of improvement. The focus will shift to include more assessment measures to accommodate multiple learning styles. Therefore, the SLO will be changed to "Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills". This SLO will be measured in two different ways: (1) Students in IDS 4020 and IDS 4030 will participate in several discussion forums which will serve as precursors to larger assignments. The discussions will encourage independent, critical thinking. The target will be to have 90% of students earn an 80% or higher cumulative score on their discussion forum posts. (2) Students in IDS 4030 will complete a final reflection essay in which they reflect on and discuss their capstone and undergraduate experience. The submission will be evaluated based on the language and appearance of essay as well as their ability to critically think and personally reflect on their experiences. The target is to have 100% of the students earn an 80% or higher on the assignment assessed using an established rubric.

**SLO 3: Students will demonstrate specific written communication and interpersonal skills.**

### Measure 3.1. (Direct – knowledge)

**Description:** Students will demonstrate specific written communication and interpersonal skills in the synthesis of a job application cover letter and resume as well as in a mock interview. Each of these is a required assignment/activity in IDS 4030.

**Acceptable Target:** Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce a job application cover letter and resume that each earns a score of at least seventy-five percent (75%). Ninety percent (90%) of students will conduct a mock job interview that earns a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

**Ideal Target:** All (100%) students will pass the assessments with a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

## Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** Each semester

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Instructor of IDS 4020/4030 and Dean

**Finding:** Target not met.

**Analysis:** In AC 2020-2021, the target was met regarding the construction of a job application covers letter with 7/7 (100%) of the students earning a score of at least 75%, was not met regarding the construction of a resume with 6/7 (85%) of the students earning a score of at least 75% and was met regarding the mock job interview with 7/7 (100%) students earning a score of at least 80%. This was the first time that faculty began offering Liberal Arts majors two new courses: IDS 4020 (Perspectives/Senior Seminar) and IDS 4030 (Career Readiness/Senior Seminar). These courses, which encompass the experiential learning component of the BA in Liberal Arts degree help students transition from student to professional by assisting them with the creation of resumes and job application cover letters as well as researching how to search for jobs, network, and develop the soft skills needed to succeed in today's workforce. The creation of cover letters and resumes as well as participation in mock interviews in these courses were used to assess students' written communication and interpersonal skills.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2021-2022, the target was not met regarding the construction of a job application covers letter with 8/11 (73%) of the students earning a score of at least 75%, was met regarding the construction of a resume with 10/11 (91%) of the students earning a score of at least 75% and was met regarding the mock job interview with 10/11 (91%) students earning a score of at least 80%.

**Decision:** In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of these AC 2020-2021 results, for AC 2021-2022, the IDS 4020/4030 instructors created recorded lectures detailing the different components of a cover letter and resume as well as discussion of tips and common mistakes in their construction. Additionally, all IDS 4020 instructors reserved a 1–2-hour block of office hours during the week the final cover letter/resume assignments were due to ensure their availability for any last minute, student assistance. For additional instruction on job interview preparation, sample mock interview(s) were recorded and provided to the students to showcase professional appearance and proper verbal and non-verbal communication. Students were also provided with a list of common interview questions or scenarios to illustrate how to best respond/react. Students were also matched with mock interview partners with similar professional goals or experiences to engage students in the process of beginning to develop a networking circle. While these changes did result in improvement from the previous AC, the target was still not met. For the AC 2022-2023, the following will be implemented to drive the cycle of improvement. The focus will split the communication skills into separate SLOs. The development of verbal communication skills will begin being assessed in a separate measure of "SLO1: Students will identify potential career opportunities". SLO3 will be changed to "Students will demonstrate appropriate writing skills". This SLO will be measured in three different ways: (1) Students in IDS 4020 will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by creating an organized

## Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

chronological resume. The target will be to have 90% of students earn a 75% or higher on the assignment assessed using an established rubric. (2) Students in IDS 4020 will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by writing a professional cover letter. The target is to have 90% of the students earn a 75% or higher on the assignment assessed using an established rubric. (3) Students in IDS 4030 will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by creating a minimum 3-page essay in APA format. The topic of the essay will cover the soft skills needed for their chosen profession and discuss strategies to strengthen those skills. The target is to have 90% of the students earn an 80% or higher on the assignment assessed using an established rubric.

### Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvement Based on Analysis of Results

For AC 2020-2021 the academic advisors, IDS 4020/4030 instructors, and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences examined the three measures for the three Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) of the BA in Liberal Arts programs. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2021-2022. These changes were based on the knowledge gained through the analysis of AC 2020-2021 results:

- Advisors worked more closely with the students as they develop their Degree Completion Plans to outline their completion to degree and worked to encourage greater communication regarding their academic progression/retention needs.
- In IDS 4020/4030, the overall point value for discussion board posts was increased such that it weighed heavier on the students' final course grades.
- The instructions for the Final Reflective Essay were altered and more extensively conveyed to students. The assignment prompt was adjusted from paragraph format such that each question was separated and numbered to help students ensure they were responding to and reflecting on all aspects of the discussion prompt.
- In IDS 4020/4030, additional instruction on cover letter and resume synthesis was provided. All students were provided with a recorded lecture that broke down the different components of a cover letter and resume as well as discussed tips and common mistakes in their construction.
- All IDS 4020 instructors reserved 1–2-hour block of office hours during the week the final cover letter/resume assignments were due to ensure their availability for any last minute, student assistance.
- For mock job interview preparation, sample mock interview(s) were recorded and provided to the students to showcase professional appearance and proper verbal and non-verbal communication. Common interview questions and/or scenarios were included to illustrate how to best respond/react.
- IDS 4020/4030 instructors were able to match mock interview partners who had

## Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

similar professional goals or experiences which engaged students in the process of beginning to develop a networking circle.

### Plan of action moving forward:

During the AC 2022-2023, faculty will implement the following to drive further improvements in student achievement of the BA of Liberal Arts program Student Learning Outcomes:

- We will shift the focus from the student's degree completion plan to the student's career plans. SLO1 will be changed from "Students will design, develop, and implement a program of study including a degree completion plan by semester. This plan will show both disciplinary (minor or concentration) courses and inter/multi-disciplinary connections within the COAS. The student will articulate their goals in designing their Program of Study and Degree Completion Plan." to "Students will identify potential career opportunities". This SLO will be measured in three different ways: (1) Students enrolled in IDS 4030 will identify relevant career networking agencies. This will be assessed in a class assignment with an established grading rubric. (2) Students enrolled in IDS 4030 will complete an informational interview assignment relevant to their career interests. (3) Students enrolled in IDS 4020 will complete a mock interview assignment in which each student is paired up with a classmate with a similar career interest. The students will coach each other through mock interviews taking turns in the role of interviewer and interviewee.
- We will shift focus to include more assessment measures to accommodate multiple learning styles. SLO2 will be changed from "Students will analyze, apply, and illustrate their ability to integrate skills including, but not limited to: library usage, electronic resource engagement, field experiences, and data and research collection through laboratory and field-based research. (Critical thinking skills)" to "Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills". This SLO will be measured in two different ways: (1) Students in IDS 4020 and IDS 4030 will participate in several discussion forums which will serve as precursors to larger assignments. The discussions will encourage independent, critical thinking. (2) Students in IDS 4030 will complete a final reflection essay in which they reflect on and discuss their capstone and undergraduate experience. The submission will be evaluated based on the language and appearance of essay as well as their ability to critically think and personally reflect on their experiences.
- We will split the assessment of students' communication skills into separate SLOs. The development of verbal communication skills will begin being assessed in a separate measure of "SLO1: Students will identify potential career opportunities". SLO3 will be changed from "Students will demonstrate specific written communication and interpersonal skills." to "Students will demonstrate appropriate writing skills". This SLO will be measured in three different ways: (1) Students in IDS 4020 will be required



## **Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022**

to demonstrate written communication skills by creating an organized chronological resume. (2) Students in IDS 4020 will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by writing a professional cover letter. (3) Students in IDS 4030 will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by creating a minimum 3-page essay in APA format. The topic of the essay will cover the soft skills needed for their chosen profession and discuss strategies to strengthen those skills.

# Assessment Cycle 2021 – 2022

## Rubric

### **Program of Study**

- 1 point: Program shows coursework across multiple disciplines
- 3 points: Program indicates a disciplinary theme
- 5 points: Program integrates specific disciplinary themes that support professional and career goals