

Assessment Cycle 2022-2023

Program: Associate (AGS) (733) and Bachelor of General Studies (BGS) (734)

College: Arts and Sciences

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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.

General Studies Program Mission Statement: Recognizing the value of special programs for students with unusual backgrounds and abilities, the General Studies program is responsive to today's student. It provides flexibility to allow the student's curriculum to adapt to interests, backgrounds, time limitations, and career goals. It is especially appropriate for a mature person who has, because of various educational and work experiences, a clear focus and strong commitment to a particular course of study.

Methodology: The assessment process for the BGS program is as follows:

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative, and qualitative) are collected and returned to the program coordinator.
- (2) The program coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes. Results from the assessment will be discussed with the professional staff advisors.

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- (3) The program coordinator, in consultation with the professional staff advisors, may propose changes to measurable outcomes, assessment tools for the next assessment period and where needed, curricula and program changes.
- (4) Based on the low-count of students and/or courses attempted at NSU, students who are pursuing an Associate of General Studies (AGS) degree are factored into, as appropriate, the assessment of student learning-outcomes.

Student Learning Outcomes: Bachelor of General Studies

SLO 1. Students will demonstrate appropriate writing skills.

Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge)

Description: Students will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by creating an organized chronological resume.

- IDS 4020: Perspectives / Senior Seminar

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students earn a 75% or higher on the assignment assessed using an established rubric.

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

Findings: Target was not met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met (80/92 students = 86%). To enhance the quality of the assignment, the course steward recorded a lecture on resume writing to drive continuous improvement. In the prior AC, we saw an improvement toward our target with the addition of written documents that provided tips on creating a resume and reviewed common writing/formatting mistakes. This provided additional support to our students whose learning styles identify as more auditory rather than visual.

As a result of the analysis in AC 2021-2022, in AC 2022-2023, the target was not met, (93/106 students = 88%). It is noted that AC 2022-23 findings were a mere two percentage points away from the acceptable target. However, two of the 106 students did not submit their respective documents earning a score of 0, thus negatively affecting the target. Additionally, a significant number of the students who did not

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produce “average-level” work has been attributed to students lacking proper attention to detail and not carefully following directions. The instructors hypothesize that first draft submissions should be graded more stringently.

Decision: Based upon the analysis of the results from AC 2022-2023 and to drive the cycle of improvement, in AC 2023-2024, the first draft submission for resume assignments will require each student to highlight (yellow) all action verbs (*i.e.*, facilitated, monitored, supervised, accounted for, *etc.*) used to describe their present and past positions in the “Work Experience” section. This will stress importance of action verb usage prior to their final resume submission. The course steward and instructors will thoroughly review the grading rubric using the feedback of all instructors.

Measure 1.2 (Direct – Skill) IDS 4020

Description: Students will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by writing a professional cover letter.

- IDS 4020: Perspectives/ Senior Seminar

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students earn a 75% or higher on the assignment assessed using an established rubric.

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

Findings: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was met (84/92 students = 91%). Like the approach for the chronological resume, the students who did not earn a final grade of “C” or above demonstrated a lack of attention to detail, poor spelling, and improper formatting. The course steward added an additional resource to the assignment content components of a cover letter, as well as discussing tips and common mistakes in formatting and writing.

As a result of analysis of AC 2021-2022, in AC 2022-2023, the target was met (93/106 students = 89.6%, rounded up to 90%). The course steward made several modifications. The course steward recorded a lecture on proper cover letter components and format to drive continuous improvement. For many of the traditional age seniors in the cohort (21- and 22-year-olds), this was their first ever attempt at a cover letter. Instructors’ grading on the first draft provided a good foundation and positive feedback for students’ final draft submissions.

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Decision: Based on the analysis of AC 2022-2023, in AC 2023-2024, the course steward will make several edits. To drive continuous improvement, students will be required to submit a first draft of the assignment in which the student clearly states the position title they are applying for and supply the advertised available position on the next page. This will eliminate applications for non-advertised jobs. The course steward, with the support of the IDS instructors, will drive continuous improvement by reviewing the grading rubric for the final submission.

Measure 1.3 (Direct – Skill) IDS 4030

Description: Students will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by creating a 3-page paper covering soft skills need for their chosen career.

- IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students earn an 80% or higher on the assignment assessed using an established rubric.

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 4030

Findings: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met (67/83 students = 88%). The students who did not meet the target (12% of cohort) likely did not fully understand the assignment directions and were penalized for not complying with the required APA style writing.

Based on the analysis of AC 2021-2022, in AC 2022-2023, the target was met (100-106 = 94%). To enhance the quality of the assignment, in AC 2022-2023, the course steward provided several resources on APA style writing and implemented an APA style quiz leading up to the submission of the soft skills essay. Additionally, all IDS 4030 instructors provided students with a sample essay as a reference to illustrate expectations regarding the assignment.

Decision: Based on the results of AC 2022-2023 and to drive continuous improvement, in AC 2023-2024, the course steward, with the support of the IDS instructors, will require all students to submit an earlier, mandatory assignment of their first paragraph of the paper in which they introduce the three soft skills they will address in their full 3-page paper. This edit will be reflected in an adjustment to the grading rubric. Secondly, the target will be increased to 90%.

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SLO 2. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills.

Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill) IDS 4020

Description: Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by completing several discussion board forums throughout the capstone course.

- IDS 4020: Perspectives / Senior Seminar

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce three discussion board posts that earn 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: IDS 4020 faculty member

Findings: Target was not met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met (61/92 students = 66%). The target was not met due to many students not posting the required responses (two responses required). It was predicted that this oversight was partly because of the minimal point value assigned to each posting. The course steward increased the point value of the assignments to facilitate greater participation.

Based on the analysis of results from AC 2021-2022, in AC 2022-2023, the target was not met, however there was a 6% increase during AC 2022-2023 compared to previous academic cycles. The course steward increased the point value of each discussion forum. Previously, all discussions forums were 10-points each, therefore only factoring approximately 12% of a student's final grade. As a result of the findings, the three discussion board assignments were increased to 20 points per assignment, thus totaling sixty points. It has been noted students have lacked follow-thru on discussion board posts, not followed directions fully, or responded to posts, as assigned.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, in AC 2023-2024, the course steward will drive continuous improvement by requiring instructors to reinforce their discussion board posts. It will be stressed that the forum posts must have the following: (1) a minimum word requirement; (2) be well-organized, concise, and easily understood; and (3) there must be a response to at least two other students' posts. Students not adhering to the above will not receive credit for the assignment until they do so. These actions will benefit the student by requiring them to complete the posts accurately, thus

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fully engaging themselves in the assignment.

Measure 2.2. (Direct – Skill) IDS 4030

Description: Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by completing several discussion board forums prompts throughout the capstone course.

- IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce three discussion board posts that earn 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: IDS 4030 faculty member

Findings: Target was not met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met (64/83 students = 77%). To enhance the quality of the assignment, the course steward increased the point value of each discussion forum. The course steward increased the discussion board post assignments to 20-points each with equal value to the student's initial post and the required number of classmate responses. Students were encouraged to complete the assignment fully, rather than just the portion with the higher point value. Some assignment modifications were made, but the target was not met.

In AC 2022-23, the target was not met (79/106 students = 74%). The target was not met due to a pattern of decreasing student participation in the posts. Moving forward, in addition to the higher point value assigned per post, the course steward will enforce the minimum word requirement, ensure posts are well-organized, and ensure that the required number of responses are submitted.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, in AC 2023-2024, the course steward will drive continuous improvement by requiring instructors to reinforce their discussion board forum posts have the following (1) a minimum word requirement and (2) is well-organized, concise, and easily understood. Instructors will also reinforce that (3) students must respond to at least two other students' posts. Students not adhering to the above will not receive credit until they do so. The target will be adjusted to have 80% of all students earn an 80% or above on this soft skills discussion board forum posts. These actions will benefit the student by requiring them to complete the post accurately, thus fully engaging themselves in the assignment.

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Measure 2.3 (Direct) IDS 4030

Description: Students are required to demonstrate critical thinking skills by completing a final reflection essay, in which students are to reflect on and discuss their capstone and overall undergraduate experience.

- IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Acceptable Target: One hundred percent (100%) of students will produce a score of 24/30 points, earning 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: IDS 4030 faculty member

Findings: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was met (80/83 students = 96%). The course steward made a few modifications. The final reflection became a mandatory assignment in IDS 4030. In addition, the reflection prompt was adjusted from paragraph format to one in which each question was separated and numbered to help students ensure that they were responding to and reflecting on all aspects of the discussion prompt.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2022-23, the target was met with (105/106 students = 99%) earning an 80% or above. Almost all students accurately completed the final reflection assignment at the ideal target rate of 100%. The high percentage of grades validated the importance of this assignment and for the course steward to maintain the final reflection assignment format.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, to drive continuous improvement for AC 2023-2024, the course steward will use the same assignment delivery format and keep the final reflection assignment mandatory. Additionally, the course steward will increase the target to 85% (or greater than 25/30 points).

SLO 3. Students will identify potential career opportunities.

Measure 3.1. (Direct) IDS 4030

Description: Students will identify relevant career networking agencies (or future graduate programs).

- IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

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Acceptable Target: Eighty-five percent of the students score 80% or higher on the course assignment.

Ideal Target: All (100%) students will score 80% or higher on the course assignment.

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: IDS 4030 faculty member

Findings: Target was not met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was met (71/83 students = 85%). To enhance the quality of the assignment the course steward made modifications to the instructions to ensure the required closing paragraph was not overlooked as it was in past ACs. Additionally, all IDS 4030 instructors gave students the options to identify five graduate schools of interest as opposed to career/networking agencies as we have noticed an increase in students planning to complete a graduate degree prior to pursuing their chosen career.

As a result of analysis of AC 2021-2022, in AC 2022-2023, the target was not met by one percentage point (89/106 students = 84%). Many of the students did well in completing the career network assignment. It should be noted that two students did not submit this assignment, thus affecting the overall target percentage. Several students did not provide specificity regarding their HR point of contact which was the purpose of the assignment.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the 2022-2023 results, to drive continuous improvement for AC 2023-2024, the course steward will tailor the career network assignment directions. All students must identify a specific point of contact (first name, last name, and job title) as we have noticed that many students have been too vague and listed “attention Human Resources.” The same adjustment will be made for graduate programs (the student must list a specific point of contact rather than simply “Graduate Coordinator”).

Measure 3.2. (Direct) IDS 4030

Description: Students will complete an informational interview assignment relevant to their career interests.

- IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Acceptable Target: Eighty-five percent of the students will score 80% or higher on the course assignment, assessed with an established grading rubric.

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Ideal Target: All (100%) students will score 80% or higher on the course assignment.

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: IDS 4030 faculty member

Findings: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was met (73/83 students = 87%). The course steward provided a sample informational interview, as well as a list of sample questions. These modifications were made so students could better understand the outline of the assignment.

As a result of analysis of AC 2021-2022, in AC 2022-2023, the target was met (93/106 students = 88%), increasing a percentage point from the previous academic cycle. The target was met due to students successfully completing the informational interview through the proper delivery of the informational interview assignment. However, a portion of students procrastinated, resulting in a weaker selection of interviewee, thus resulting in their below average grade.

Decision: Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, in AC 2023-2024 the course steward will drive continuous improvement by adding specificity to the interview by assigning it 3-4 weeks in advance. Each student must email the instructor at least one week in advance with details pertaining to who the interview will be with and what the career (or graduate program) is. It has been noted several students have waited until last day to complete this project (or requested an extension). Those interviews have not been as effective and beneficial. Students have seen greater success in reaching the targets when allowed the opportunity to tailor their assignments and research to their goals. This topic will be addressed with the Dean and instructors this summer.

Measure 3.3 (Direct – Skill) IDS 4030

Description: Students will complete a mock interview assignment in which each student is paired with a classmate with a similar career interest.

- IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent of the students will score 80% or higher on the course assignment, assessed with an established grading rubric.

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Ideal Target: All (100%) students will score 80% or higher on the course assignment.

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: IDS 4030 faculty member

Findings: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was met (84/92 students = 91%). To enhance the quality of the assignment, the course steward made several adjustments. Due to conflicting schedules, students were given a larger window to meet and complete this assignment. Students were also paired with a partner who shares similar career goals or experiences and who may also serve as a potential networking contact for their future. All capstone instructors informed students that they are willing to meet virtually to practice and/or conduct the mock interview themselves to allow more one-on-one feedback between student and instructor.

As a result of analysis of AC 2021-2022, in AC 2022-23, the target was met (101/106 students = 88%). The target was met because students acknowledged the importance of the mock interview assignment. Student feedback included comments such as, “this was my first mock interview”, “I was nervous, I did not know my partner”, “I enjoyed the process”. The course steward executed the assignment description and will continue to encourage professionalism in the mock interviews.

Decision: Based on the analysis of AC 2022-2023 result, in AC 2023-2024, to drive continuous improvement, students will “partner-up” with classmates with similar career or school interests to actively engage, listen, and mentor each other through mock interviews as they take turns in the role of interviewer and interviewee. The IDS Instructors will pay attention and grade accordingly for proper attire and professionalism (sloppy dress, interviewing on a bed, pillow in lap, etc.). Additionally, the target of 90% will get increased to 93% of students will earn a score of 80% or above.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results:

- Recorded lectures were added to several assignments (chronological resume, cover letter, and mock interview) to not only review the instructions and expectations for the assignment but also to better support the variety of learning styles of our students.
- Instructors offered 1–2-hour windows during their office hours to aid and/or provide more stringent feedback for the resume and cover letter assignments and encouraged to accommodate any non-traditional students outside of this window as needed.

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- Course steward created a more comprehensive grading rubric for the soft skills essay to better outline the expectations of the assignment as well as ensure consistent grading across all sections of the capstone.
- Students provided the option to submit a draft of their soft skills essay for review, APA formatting, and feedback before submitting their final draft for grading.
- The point value of all discussion boards was increased with equal value to the student's initial post and the required number of classmate responses to encourage full participation.
- The point value of the final reflection was doubled to ensure all students participate and produce quality level work.
- Students had the option to research a combination of both career opportunities and graduate schools to complete their career networking assignment.
- Students were provided the option to contact an advisor/representative from a graduate school of interest to complete their informational interview.
- Students were paired with a partner who shared similar career goals for the mock interview assignment.

Plan of Action Moving Forward:

During the AC 2023-2024, faculty will implement the following to drive further improvements to enhance the BGS program's student learning outcomes:

- The required first draft submission of the resume assignment will require each student to highlight (yellow) at least five action verbs (*i.e.*, facilitated, monitored, supervised, accounted for, *etc.*) they used in their job history to stress importance of action verb usage.
- The first draft of the cover letter assignment will require the student to clearly state the position title they are applying for and supply the advertised available position on the next page.
- Instructors will require all students to submit a mandatory assignment consisting of the first paragraph of their paper in which they introduce the three soft skills they will address. This edit will be reflected in an adjustment to the grading rubric.
- For the soft skills discussion board assignment, students will be required to

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submit a post in which they list the potential three soft skills (or more) they will research for their three-page APA style paper.

- The course steward will adding specificity to the interview assignment by assigning it 3-4 weeks in advance and requiring that the students email the instructor in advance with information on who the interview will be with and what the career (or graduate program) is.
- Students will “partner-up” with other student(s) with similar career or school interests to actively engage, listen and mentor each other through mock interviews as they take turns in the role of interviewer and interviewee. The IDS Instructors will pay attention and grade accordingly for proper attire and professionalism (sloppy dress, interviewing on a bed, pillow in lap, *etc.*)