

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

Bachelor of Arts – Liberal Arts (220)

College: Arts and Sciences

Prepared by: Steve Hicks

Date: May 17, 2023

Approved by: Dr. Francene Lemoine

Date: June 9, 2023

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 seventh 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 sixty-eight of the required 120 semester hours of Liberal Arts curriculum as follows:

- Fifteen semester hours of courses at the 1000 and 2000 level from the College of Arts and Sciences
- Twenty-seven semester hours of courses at the 3000 and 4000 level from the College of Arts and Sciences or from a concentration area

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

- Twenty-six semester hours selected from a concentration area or from courses within the College of Arts and Sciences

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 function 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 demonstrate appropriate writing skills.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus objectives.

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

IDS 4020: Perspectives / Senior Seminar

IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge)

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

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

Finding: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met with only 8/11 (73%) of the students earning a score of at least 75%. In last year's assessment report, the College Dean, IDS 4020/4030 instructors, and BA LA academic advisors decided to modify the learning outcome to read "Students will demonstrate appropriate writing skills". This decision and strategy best align both BA LA and BGS degree programs. That is, both degree programs use the same two capstone courses which share combined enrollments (6 sections in fall '22 and 6 sections in spring '23). In all previous years, this student learning outcome had been assessed with one measurement. However, in AC 2022-23, it was measured via three specific assignments (measure 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3, respectively).

In AC 2022-23, the target was met as 15/16 (93%) students earned the target score on the final resume submission. The AC 2022-23 percentage is attributed to more stringent grading of the first draft of the student's resume as well as additional instructional access/support and resources. IDS course steward added a recording (video) on resume writing to help drive improvement, and students indicated that this resource helped them successfully complete the assignment.

Decision: In 2022-2023, the target was met. Based on the 2022-2023 results analysis, the faculty will implement the following changes in 2023-2024. The first draft submission for the resume will require that each student highlights (yellow) at least five action verbs used in the descriptions of their present and/or past positions (*i.e.*, facilitated, monitored, supervised, accounted for, *etc.*) to stress importance of action verb usage and consideration of those terms in their final resume submission. The course steward and instructors will thoroughly review the grading rubric, thus using the feedback of all instructors.

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

Measure 1.2. (Direct – knowledge)

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

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

Finding: The target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was met regarding the construction of a cover letter with 10/11 (91%) of the students earning a score of at least 75%. Like the approach for the chronological resume, the course steward added an additional resource to the assignment which included descriptions of the components of a cover letter, as well as discussing tips and common mistakes made. As a result, in AC 2022-23, 100% (16/16) scored a 75% or higher; therefore, the target was met. The decision to fully align the 2021-22 single measure into three separate measures for 2022-23 (3.1, 3.2 and 3.3) proved to be successful.

Decision: In 2022-2023, the target was met. To drive continuous improvement, 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. 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 – knowledge)

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

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 assessment with a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: Instructor of IDS 4030

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

Finding: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the assignment was not a part of IDS 4030, thus data was not available. In AC 2022-23 the target was met with 100% (16/16) of the students earning at least 40/50 total points. The decision to fully align the 2021-22 single measure (3.1) into three separate measures for 2022-23 (3.1, 3.2 and 3.3) proved to be successful.

Decision: In 2022-2023, the target was met. The course steward, with the support of the IDS instructors, will drive continuous improvement by requiring all students to include a mandatory first paragraph introducing the three soft skills they will address. This edit will be reflected in an adjustment to the grading rubric.

SLO 2: Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus objectives.

IDS 4020: Perspectives / Senior Seminar

IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill / Ability):

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

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

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met with 8/10 (80%) the students earning a cumulative discussion board postings score of at least 80% and 8/10 (80%) students synthesizing a Final Reflective Essay that scored at least 80%. In last year's assessment report, the College Dean, IDS 4020/4030 instructors, and BA LA academic advisors decided to enhance this learning outcome by changing from "Students will analyze, apply, and illustrate their ability to integrate skills including, but not limited to:

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

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 three ways: (1) Students in IDS 4020 will participate in several discussion forums which will serve as precursors to larger assignments; (2) Students in IDS 4030 will participate in several discussion forums which will serve as precursors to larger assignments. The discussions will encourage independent, critical thinking; and (3) Students in IDS 4030 will complete a final reflection essay in which they reflect on and discuss their capstone and undergraduate experience.

Although there were several noted changes, in AC 2022-23, the target was not met as 13/16 (81%) of the students earned an 80% or above on their combined three discussion board submissions.

- 3 DB posts from IDS 4020, (60 pts.)

Decision: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met. Based upon a summer 2022 decision to align both BA LA and BGS degree programs student outcomes, more assessment data was used to assess critical thinking. To drive continuous improvement, instructors will reinforce that forum posts must meet the following requirements: a minimum word requirement, proper organization, be concise, and be easily understood. Instructors will also reinforce that students must respond to posts from two other student. Students not complying to the above specifications will not receive credit until they submit posts that meet required standards.

Measure 2.2. (Direct – Skill / Ability):

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

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

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2021-22, critical thinking data was not collected via discussion board posts in the IDS 4030 (it was only collected in IDS 4020). Measure 2.2 is new to this BA LA assessment. In AC 2022-23, the target was not met as only 13/16 (81%) students scored 16/20 total points on their respective soft skills discussion board assignment.

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

Decision: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met. Based upon the Summer 2022 decision to align both BA LA and BGS degree program student outcomes, more data was used to assess critical thinking. For the soft skills discussion board assignment, AC 2022-23 required one soft skill to be addressed. In AC 2023-24 students will be required to complete a discussion board post in which they list the potential three soft skills (or more) they will research for their three-page APA style paper.

Measure 2.3. (Direct – Skill / Ability):

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

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

Finding: Target met.

Analysis: In AC 2021-22 this data was collected via a final reflection essay in the IDS 4030, with 8/10 students synthesizing a final reflective essay. In AC 2022-23, the target was met as 15/16 (93.75%) students scored 24/30 total points on their final reflective essay.

Decision: In AC 2022-2023, the target was met. Based upon the Summer 2022 decision to align both BA LA and BGS degree program student learning outcomes, more data was used to assess critical thinking. For AC 2023-24, to drive continuous improvement, students must address in their essay three significant lessons learned from capstone experience (as opposed to one from previous year) and describe one area the instructor could expand on.

SLO 3. Students will identify potential career opportunities.

Course Map: Tied to the course syllabus objectives.

IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

Measure 3.1. (Direct – knowledge):

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

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

Finding: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met as 81% (9/11). This academic year marked the fifth year that advising for the BA LA program was moved to the Academic Advising Center, and we are seeing strong, positive results. The QEP and experiential learning assignments have been congruent and align BA LA student learning outcomes with BGS student learning outcomes. In the Summer 2022, the Dean visited with the IDS course steward and it was determined that the focus of the student's degree completion plan would shift to the students identifying career plans.

As a result of these changes implemented in AC 2022-2023, the acceptable target was met with 93.75% (15/16) of assessed BA LA students successfully identifying relevant career networking agencies via their IDS 4030 class assignment with a score of 85% (or higher). The assignment had more relevance to all students by including both "pursue a graduate degree" and/or "researching various agencies".

Decision: In AC 2021-2022, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of those assessment results, in AC 2022-2023, changes were made to better drive improvement, measures, and data. Those efforts resulted in the target being met for the AC 2022-2023 with students identifying tangible, applicable career opportunities or graduate plans. To drive the cycle of improvement for 2023-24, all students must identify a specific point of contact (first name, last name) to remind them of the importance of not simply addressing inquiries to "Human Resources" or "Graduate Coordinator".

Measure 3.2. (Direct – knowledge):

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

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

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

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

Finding: Target was met

Analysis: Measure 3.2 is new for the BA LA annual report. This data was not gathered in 2021-22. In AY 2022-23, 93.75% (15/16) earned an 80% or above on their Informational Interview. The assignments in the BA LA have been congruent with and align to their respective student learning outcomes with BGS student learning outcomes.

Decision: In AC 2022-23, the target was met at 93.75%. For 2023-24, the course steward will drive continuous improvement 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 who the interview will be with and what the career (or graduate program) is. It has been noted that several students waited until last day to complete this project (or requested an extension). These interviews have not been 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. One student (1/16) did not submit this assignment, so we are considering making the information interview assignment mandatory to pass the class. This topic will be addressed with the Dean and instructors this summer.

Measure 3.3. (Direct – knowledge):

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

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

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

Finding: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2021-22, the target was met with 10/11 (91%) students scoring an 80% or higher on the mock interview. Several sample mock interviews were recorded and

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

provided to showcase verbal and non-verbal communication. As a result, in AY 2022-23, 100% (16/16) earned an 80% or above on their Informational Interview.

Decision: In AC 2022-23, the target was met at 100% (16/16). Although the target was met, there is always room for growth. For 2023-24, the course steward will continue to drive continuous improvement. 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.)

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

Academic advisors, IDS 4020/4030 instructors, and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences examined three Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) of the BA in Liberal Arts programs and their measures. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous improvement in AC 2022-2023. These changes were based on the knowledge gained through the analysis of our findings:

- AC 2022-23 was the first year to use the same outcomes and measures as the BGS annual assessment since both BA LA and BGS students complete similar academic programs but identical capstones. That is, all three student learning outcomes for BA LA now have multiple measures to evaluate. They did not the previous year.
- BA LA degree program has had impressive growth in student data this academic year. There were 16 total students in 2022-2023, with two more students slated for summer 2023 (18 total). These numbers almost double the eleven (11) from the previous year.
- 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. Additionally, instructors critically graded first edition drafts to ensure documents are ready for job applications for the final drafts.
- For mock job interview preparation, sample mock interview(s) were recorded and

Assessment Cycle 2022 – 2023

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 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 2023-2024, faculty will implement the following to drive further improvements to enhance the BA of LA program's Student Learning Outcomes. This upcoming 2023-24 assessment cycle will be the second year of reporting data in using additional respective measures that are congruent with the BGS program outcome. IDS instructors will use incorporate minor revisions and edits, such as:

- The required first draft submission for resume will require that each student highlights (yellow) at least five action verbs used in their job history (*i.e.*, facilitated, monitored, supervised, accounted for, *etc.*) 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.
- All students will be required to include a mandatory first paragraph introducing the three soft skills they will address in their 3-page essay on important soft skills. This edit will be reflected in an adjustment to the grading rubric.
- For the soft skills discussion board assignment, students will be required to list the potential three soft skills (or more) they will research for their three-page APA style paper.
- The course steward will add specificity to the mock-interview assignment by assigning it 3-4 weeks in advance, such that the student must email the instructor in advance who the interview will be with and what the career (or graduate program) is.
- Students will “partner-up” with a student(s) with similar career or graduate 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.*)