

Assessment Cycle AC 2023-2024

Program: Scholars College Liberal Arts (BA) (820)

Louisiana Scholars' College

College of 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.

Louisiana Scholars' College Mission Statement: The College's mission is to provide a quality, customized, undergraduate education firmly grounded in the liberal arts and sciences to a diverse population of well-qualified, highly motivated students by rethinking the traditional liberal arts curriculum and developing innovative approaches to honors education.

Louisiana Scholars' College Purpose: As an academic unit, the Louisiana Scholars' College is responsible for:

- administering, delivering, and enhancing courses for the honors core curriculum (the Common Curriculum), which replaces the University Core for students in the College.
- administering, setting standards, delivering, and enhancing courses for the Minor in Liberal Arts and the individualized Major in Liberal Arts and its honors concentrations: Business, Technology and Society; Classical Studies; Fine and

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Performing Arts; Foreign Languages; Humanities and Social Thought; Philosophy, Politics, and Economics; and Scientific Inquiry.

- collaborating with other departments to offer joint honors versions of 30 traditional majors, each to include the Common Curriculum, a senior thesis, and honors level major courses, as appropriate in addition to the required courses in each major, and Honors Certificates.
- mentoring students individually in the production of the senior thesis.
- advising all honors students on curricular choices to prepare them for the accelerated Master's programs and other advanced study or employment.

Students completing a concentration in the major in Liberal Arts use a combination of courses offered in the Scholars' College and approved courses offered in other departments or through study abroad.

Due to the variety of degree options in the College and the flexibility of the major in Liberal Arts, sample sizes are too small for a meaningful evaluation of Student Learning Outcomes related to specific content imparted in any of these majors. (SLOs related to content in specific joint majors are evaluated in the home departments.) The following assessment evaluates skills-based student learning outcomes common to the major in Liberal Arts and all the joint majors administered by the College as demonstrated in courses offered in the College.

Methodology: The assessment process includes:

1. evaluation of components of single assignments in courses required of all students in the College
2. evaluation of the comprehensive final exam in skills-based courses satisfying options in the Common Curriculum
3. summative evaluation of the Senior Thesis defense
4. summative evaluation of the Archival Senior Thesis

Student Learning Outcomes:

SLO 1. Demonstrate effective oral communication skills.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below

Through first semester presentation and Thesis Defense.

Measure 1.1. (Direct–Skill/Ability–oral communication)

Students make oral presentations of their term papers in SCRT 181W and the 2000-level co-classes, which are assessed using the AACU *Oral Communication* rubric. The target is for a minimum of 75% of students to earn an average rating of 3 or higher.

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Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met. The assessment covered 24 students. Based on the rubric, 37% of students averaged a score of 3 or higher on all subscales: *Organization* (62.5%), *Language* (62.5%), *Delivery* (50%), *Support* (62.5%), *Central Message* (62.5%). Overall, 38% of students averaged a 3 or above on all 5 subscales, indicating that the higher scores were concentrated in a smaller number of individuals.

Based on the AC 2022-2023 results analysis, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. Enrollments and admissions standards were addressed. The faculty decided to discuss and calibrate their approaches before assessing the oral presentations.

As a result of these changes in AC 2023-2024, the target was not met, although scores did show an improvement over the previous year's results. The assessment covered 47 students. Over the five subscales, 45% of students earned an average score of 3 or higher. Collectively, proficiency on individual sub scores varied, with the most students scoring 3 or 4 on *Organization* (74%), followed by *Central Message* (72%), *Delivery* (70%), and *Language* and *Support* (60% each). Scores on *Central Message* improved significantly ($p = .047$) Eighteen students (38%) scored a 3 or 4 on all five subscales.

Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Based on the AC 2023-2024 results analysis, the following changes will be made in AC 2024-2025 to drive improvement. The faculty will devote more class time to preparing students for the final presentation. This will be reflected in course syllabi, where at least one day of class time may be reserved for discussion and practice of presentation skills. Faculty will discuss and calibrate their assessment approaches to ensure that the ratings are being conducted according to the same standard.

Measure 1.2. (Direct–Skill/Ability–oral communication)

Students present oral defenses of their theses which are assessed using the summative rubric for the department, modified in Spring 2017. The target is for a minimum of 75% of students enrolled in the second semester of thesis to progress to the point where they can defend their work and earn a rating of *Very Good* or higher. Each rating is based on specific levels of performance, with examples given in a departmental rubric. Each defense is rated by the first and second readers as well as the Director of the College. Students who are enrolled but do not successfully defend are rated *Unsatisfactory*.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met. Of the 11 students enrolled in the second semester of thesis in spring 2023, 11 defended their theses in the spring semester; of these, 8 (73%) averaged a *Very Good* or higher.

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Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. The faculty hardened deadlines in SHUM/SBUS/SSCI/SFA 480T and 482T to encourage revision of the thesis and provide opportunities for practice of the presentation. In addition, faculty mentors were advised to offer individual coaching on presentation skills prior to the defense. Finally, seniors were encouraged to make presentations of their thesis work in progress at both undergraduate and professional conferences, including the ULL Undergraduate Research Conference, the University of Louisiana System Academic Summit, and NSU's Research Day.

As a result of these changes in AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Of the 8 students enrolled in the second semester of thesis in Spring 2024, 7 defended their theses in the spring semester. Of these, 5 (71%) averaged a rating of *Very Good* or higher, which, due to the small sample size, is not significantly different from 75 ($p = .827$). These results notwithstanding, 4 out of 5 students who met the target rating did so by a wide margin, with many assessments in the *Superlative* category. Further research also shows that all 5 of the students who met or exceeded the targeted rating had exceptionally high GPAs -- 3 had GPAs of 3.8 or above and 2 had GPAs of 3.9 or above. The GPAs of the 2 students who did not meet the rating target were 3.0 and 3.3.

Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Based on the AC 2023-2024 results analysis, the following changes will be made to drive the cycle of improvement in AC 2024-2025. The target of a *Very Good* rating for 75% of the defenses will remain in place. Furthermore, those measures adopted in the previous year will be continued. These include hardening of deadlines to encourage revision of the thesis and provide opportunities for practice of the presentation. Seniors will also continue to be encouraged to present their thesis work in progress at both undergraduate and professional conferences.

The small sample size of the assessment in this area does not allow for any general conclusions regarding the prospects or relative success of thesis students in one-degree program versus another; however, as indicated above, the results do suggest that students who have done well in their previous coursework tend also to score higher ratings on their defense. In sum, GPA seems to be a telling indicator of thesis success. Across-the-board improvements in instruction and student performance should, therefore, produce better results in this realm of assessment as well.

SLO 2. Demonstrate effective written communication skills.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below

Through first semester term paper and Archival Thesis Submission

Measure 2.1 (Direct–Skill/Ability–written communication)

Students write 4,000-word term papers in SCRT 181W and the 2000-level co-courses, which are assessed using the AACU *Written Communication* rubric. The target is for a

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minimum of 75% of students to earn a rating of 3 or higher on each individual subscale and on the average of the five subscales.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met. The target was for 75% of students to score 3 or higher on each individual subscale and on the average of the five subscales. Nine (9) out of 24 students (37.5%) averaged a 3 or higher on each subscale. Fifty-four percent (54%) of individuals had a subscale average of 3 or higher.

Based on the AC 2022-2023 results analysis, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. The faculty discussed ways to calibrate their assessment methodology, including genre and disciplinary conventions. These changes were intended to improve the students' ability to write more effectively for an audience in their discipline.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. The assessment covered 54 students, of which 46.3% scored 3 or higher on each individual subscale; 56% scored 3 or higher on the average of their five subscales. Although below the target, this does represent a considerable improvement over the previous year's results. Student performance ratings were highest in *Context*, where 78% scored a 3 or higher, and lowest in *Evidence*, where 59% scored a 3 or higher.

Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Based on the AC 2023-2024 results analysis, the following changes will be made to drive improvement. In AC 2024-2025, the target will continue to be for 75% of students to score 3 or higher on each individual subscale and on the average of the five subscales. Faculty will encourage students to devote more time to writing instruction. This may take the form of new in-class exercises, greater and prompt feedback, and increased frequency of office visits and one-on-one instruction.

Measure 2.2 (Direct–Skill/Ability–written communication)

Students will submit the archival copy of their written theses which will also be assessed using an established rubric. The target is for a minimum of 70% of students to earn a rating of *Excellent* or higher.

Finding: Target not met.

Rating of Archival Copy 2023-2024			
1 st Reader	2nd Reader	1 st Reader	2nd Reader
Very Good	Excellent	Good	Very Good
Excellent	Excellent	Superlative	Superlative
Excellent	Excellent	Excellent	Superlative
Good	Very Good		

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Analysis: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met, with 7 of 11 (64%) students averaging *Excellent* or higher on the archival thesis.

Based on the AC 2022-2023 results analysis, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. The faculty re-introduced more incremental time deadlines for the AC 2023-2024 cohort. Time management problems were also addressed in SLSC 4000 and in the thesis methods course.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Four out of 7 students (57%) averaged *Excellent* or higher on the archival thesis. Once again, the small sample size presents a challenge for analysis. In general, faculty report that students had unusual difficulty meeting the assignment deadlines and that these setbacks appeared to have a significant negative impact on the quality of the final product.

Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Based on the AC 2023-2024 results analysis, the following changes will be made to drive improvement in AC 2024-2025. In AC 2024-025, the target of 70% of students earning a rating of *Excellent* or above will be retained. In response to the concerns raised above regarding assignment deadlines, greater stress will be placed on holding thesis students to the work timetables they created in the previous spring. This issue may also be addressed by requiring students to make research presentations at the ULL Undergraduate Research Conference (or equivalent venue) in the fall as part of their thesis grade.

SLO 3. Question, analyze, evaluate, and reconcile conflicting perspectives.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

SCTT 1820: Texts and Traditions II: The Shaping of Western Thought

Measure 3.1 (Direct – knowledge) revised Spring 2023

In AC 2022-2023, the assessment was based on an essay question from the final exam in Texts and Traditions II: The Shaping of Western Thought (SCTT 1820), where students must relate their antecedent perspectives on the course theme to at least two perspectives they encountered in their reading and discussion. Students are further asked to reflect concretely on how this encounter affected their perspectives. The target was for 75% of students to earn an average of a B or better on this final exam essay. For AC 2023-2024, it was decided that the essay question would be used again but that student performance would be assessed in greater detail by employing the AACU *Critical Thinking* rubric. The target was for 75% of students to score a 3 or higher on each subscale.

Finding: Target not met.

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Analysis: In AC 2022-2023, the target was met. Of 16 students represented in the assessment, 13 (82%) scored a B or better on the essay.

Based on the AC 2022-2023 results analysis, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. The AACU *Critical Thinking* Rubric was utilized.

As a result of these changes in AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Of the 34 students included in the assessment, 25 (73.5%) scored a 3 or higher on each subscale. The subscale with the highest number of lowest rated answers (8) was *Context* ('identifying relevant contexts when presenting a position'), followed by *Student's position* and *Conclusions*, which had 5 apiece. The findings suggest that students are still falling short of meeting instructor expectations in this area of assessment. That said, a closer examination of the results reveals significant differences in scoring from professor to professor.

Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Based on the AC 2023-2024 results analysis, the following changes will be made to drive improvement. In AC 2024-2025, Measure 3.1 will continue to be used, and the essay will be assessed according to the AACU *Critical Thinking* rubric. The target will continue to be 75% of students scoring a 3 or higher on each subscale. However, the considerable differences in ratings from professor-to-professor cause difficulties. Faculty will decide to have the answers assessed by a single faculty member or to assign multiple raters to grade each paper. Course faculty will also be encouraged to discuss their approach to rating student performance on the assignment in advance with the aim of employing a common or more coherent standard of success. Given the importance of the question for assessment purposes and the concurrent need to encourage greater student reflection, it would be optimal to develop a mid-semester stand-alone assignment.

SLO 4. Demonstrate quantitative and problem-solving skills.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabi below.

Applied Statistics (SSTA 3810-01N) and Applied Calculus 1 and 2 (SMAT 2000 and 2010)

Measure 4.1. (Direct – skill/ability).

In the core mathematics course Applied Statistics (SSTA 3810-01N), 75% of students will earn a B or better on a comprehensive assessment of their knowledge and skills. The course's final assessment is a comprehensive evaluation of basic descriptive statistics, fundamental hypothesis testing, and advanced topics; analyses are completed in Excel. Students choose and perform the appropriate analyses and interpret their results in the context of the problems.

Finding: Target met.

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Analysis: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met; 7 of 11 students (64%) scored 80% or better on the final.

SSTA 3810 Final Exam 2023-2024		
score	freq.	%
< 140	1	4%
140-149	3	13%
150-159	0	0%
160-169	2	9%
170-179	3	13%
180-189	4	17%
190-200	10	43%
total	23	

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. In addition to emphasizing the importance of completing the sample exams on time, the grading scale counted all four sample exams in the final grade. In addition, since difficulty on the ANOVA project (which is not included on the final) was also related to lower performance on the final, additional support was provided to students who score below 90% on the project.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024, the target was met. The target remained for 75% of students to earn a score of 80% or better on the comprehensive final exam. Nineteen (19) of 23 students (83%) performed at the desired level. As expected, the score on the ANOVA project was a strong predictor of the score on the final assessment ($p < .001$). Many students procrastinated on the project and may have delayed other summative work in the course too long to help them do well on the final.

Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was met. Based on the AC 2023-2024 results analysis, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. In addition to emphasizing the importance of completing the sample exams on time and counting all four sample exams in the final grade, homework assignments will have earlier deadlines (relative to when the material is covered in class) to encourage students to complete their out of class work earlier and identify problems while there is still time to address them.

Measure 4.2. (Direct – skill/ability).

In the core mathematics courses, Applied Calculus 1 (SMAT 2000) and Applied Calculus 2 (SMAT 2010), 75% of students will earn a B or better on a comprehensive assessment of their knowledge and skills.

Finding: Target not met for either course.

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Analysis: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met in SMAT 2000; in SMAT 2010, the target was met, but only one student was enrolled, so the results were not generalizable to others.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2022-2023 results, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. In SMAT 2000, basic material on college algebra topics was covered at a faster pace if students did well on the homework assignments and sample exams. This gave faculty additional time to spend on more difficult topics at the end of the semester. Students rebelled against working problems in small groups, but participated in in-class problem solving individually, which led to increased dialog over problem-solving techniques. In SMAT 2010 applications were grouped according to common themes, resulting in fewer discrete units of material and more obvious connections between topics. The unit on applications of linear algebra was expanded.

As a result of these changes in AC 2023-2024, the target was not met for either course. Eight of the 15 students SMAT 2000 met the standard (53%). In SMAT 2010, six of 12 students met the standard (50%). Due to the small class sizes, neither of these proportions was significantly lower than 75% ($p = .057$ and $p = .054$, respectively). However, the proportions were surprisingly low. Therefore, student credentials were examined for SMAT 2000. All but two were first-year students who typically have difficulty learning to balance the requirements of college level math and science classes. Although the formal prerequisite for this course is only “some knowledge of elementary functions,” we recommend that first-year students taking SMAT 2000 have credit for 3 hours of MATH or SMAT. Dual enrollment credit requires a grade of B or better; students with an ACT math subscore of 27 or higher receive credit for MATH 1020 and those with a subscore of 30 or higher receive credit for both MATH 1020 and 1090 (which can be substituted for SMAT 1820). Three first-year students did not meet these recommendations; all three scored below 70% on the final, and two of them earned an F on each exam in the course. Without these three students, we would have met the target. Similarly, students performing least well in SMAT 2000 did not meet the target in SMAT 2010.

Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met for either course. Based on the AC 2023-2024 analysis results, the faculty will implement the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to drive the cycle of improvement. To ensure that students are prepared to complete SMAT 2000, we will institute a formal prerequisite in the catalog of 3 hours of MATH or SMAT with a grade of B or better, or an ACT Math subscore of 27 or higher. These changes will improve the students’ ability to apply basic concepts correctly in novel situations, making both courses more effective and pushing the cycle of improvement forward. Discussions are underway with an open access content bundler to add an inexpensive supplemental textbook for SMAT 2010 to cover additional content for second order linear homogeneous differential equations and our linear algebra topics for Spring 2025.

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SLO 5. Identify connections within and between the sciences, mathematics, humanities, and the arts.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

SCTT 2820 – Texts and Traditions IV

Measure 5.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

In SCTT 2820 (Texts and Traditions IV), students will make connections within and between the sciences, mathematics, humanities, and the arts in a summative essay assignment, using works from throughout all four courses in the Texts and Traditions sequence, courses required of all students. The target is that 75% of students will earn an average score of 3.0 or better using the AACU Values rubric for Inquiry and Analysis.

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2022-2023, the target was not met. Examining each rubric item individually, only 31% earned a 3 or better on all six items; the best performances occurred on *Topic Selection*, *Design Process*, *Conclusions*, and *Limitations and Implications*, which had 69% of students earning a 3 or better. The worst performance was *Analysis*, with only 46% of students earning a 3 or better.

Based on the AC 2022-2023 analysis results, the faculty made the following changes in AC 2023-2024: faculty provided additional guidance on how students could make connections for themselves. Clearer instructions were given in writing for the final essay in terms of specific expectations for an “A-level performance” to help students more clearly articulate their research questions and produce works of appropriate (and typically narrower) scope. The target was for 75% of students to earn an average score of 3.0 or better using the AACU Values rubric for Inquiry and Analysis. Examining each rubric item individually, only 40% earned a 3 or better on all six items. The best performance was for *Topic Selection* with 100% of students earning a score of 3 or better (80% earned a 4). The next best results were for *Existing Knowledge*, *Design Process*, and *Analysis*, with at least 80% of students earning a score of 3 or better. The weakest areas were for *Conclusions* (60% scored 3; there were no 4s) and *Limitations and Implications* (40% scored a 3, there were no 4s).

As a result of these changes, in AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Compared to the 2022-2023 results, weaknesses appeared where there had been strengths, for *Conclusions* and *Limitations and Implications*, and growth appeared where there were weaknesses, in particular *Analysis* and *Topic Selection*. Overall, a greater percentage of students (40% versus 31%) earned scores of 3 or better in all categories. It may be that the increased emphasis by the faculty in SCTT 2820 on analysis and topic selection resulted in decreased attention to the other areas. There were no significant changes in the course content.

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Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Based on the AC 2023-2024 analysis results, the following changes will be made to drive improvement in AC 2024-2025. The faculty will provide renewed guidance on writing a complete essay, including providing an effective conclusion and discussing the limitations and implications of their analysis. This may be done by requiring an outline or other details as part of the required proposal for the essay. Faculty will provide guidance in such areas of analysis.

Measure 5.2. (Direct-Knowledge)

Using the 'interdisciplinary' courses in the Humanities and Social Thought Concentration of the Liberal Arts Major, students will be assessed on a question which asks them to identify connections within and between the sciences, mathematics, humanities, and the arts. The list of courses currently includes SART 3820; SECO 3840, 3850, 3860; SHIS 3700, 3710; SLSC 3800, 3810, 3820, 3830, or 4820; or SPHI 3910. As a degree requirement, these courses are offered on rotation every year. The target is that 75% of students will earn an average score of 3.0 or better using the AACU Values rubric for Inquiry and Analysis.

Finding: This measure will be used beginning in AC 2024-2025.

SLO 6. Find, evaluate, and use appropriate information for scholarship from both the electronic and print media

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

SBUS 4000/SLSC 4000 Thesis Research Methods

Measure 6.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

Using the annotated bibliography and the final proposal, students will be assessed on their ability to find scholarly sources for their theses, select those which are appropriate for their topics, and use them to support their final proposals, as stated in the SLO. Seventy-five percent (75%) of students will score an average of 3 or better on the AACU Values rubric for *Information Literacy*.

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SLSC 4000/SBUS 4000 Proposal References Spring 2024	
Average score	#
2	1
2.4	1
2.6	3
3.6	1
4	1
total	7

Finding: Target not met

Analysis: This is a new SLO, not assessed in AC 2022-2023. However, based on archival data, the target was not met; only two of six students (33%) scored 3 or higher on the Information Literacy components of their thesis proposal.

In AC 2023-2024, which is the first academic cycle for this measure to be instituted, two students out of 7 met the target. In terms of individual items on the rubric, all students scored a 3 or higher on the item, *Evaluate Information and its Sources Critically*. The class also met the target on *Access and Use Information Ethically and Legally*, with all but one meeting expectations for citing and providing references in an appropriate style, choosing whether to provide attribution for ideas, and choosing whether to quote, paraphrase, or summarize content. They were least successful in *Using Information Effectively to Accomplish a Specific Purpose*, largely due to a failure to use a significant number of their sources or a failure to blend ideas from multiple sources. Since the assessment of this SLO was not planned last year, instruction was not changed from previous years. In addition, half of the students were taking this course a year early to accommodate study away or early graduation and so they had less academic experience in their discipline.

Decision: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met. Based on the AC 2023-2024 analysis results, the following changes will be made to drive the cycle of improvement in AC 2024-2025. The faculty will more clearly delineate the various steps involved in Information Literacy: identifying the information required to address the topic, finding and accessing that information, critically evaluating the quality of the information, using the information to support their argument, and blending information from more than one source; and documenting their use of the ideas of others in a style appropriate for their discipline. A new assignment will be added to SLSC/SBUS 4000 in which students will document their search strategies and their choices related to the rubric items. In addition, individual assessments will be forwarded to the first readers of each thesis to address the weaknesses of their students.

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Measure 6.2. (Direct – Knowledge)

Using the thesis exam copy, students will be assessed on their ability to find scholarly sources for their theses, select those which are appropriate for their topics, use them to support their final arguments, and document their use in a style appropriate to their discipline. Seventy-five percent (75%) of students will score an average of 3 or better on the AACU Values rubric for *Information Literacy*.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus below.

SBTS/SBUS/SFPA/SHUM/SSCI 482T Thesis

Finding: This measure will be used beginning in AC 2024-2025.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvement based on analysis of results.

The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2023-2024. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through the analysis of AC 2022-2023 results.

- In Measure 1.1, enrollments and admissions standards were addressed. The faculty decided to discuss and calibrate their approaches before assessing the oral presentations.
- In Measure 1.2, the faculty hardened deadlines in SHUM/SBUS/SSCI/SFA 480T and 482T to encourage revision of the thesis and provide opportunities for practice of the presentation. In addition, faculty mentors were advised to offer individual coaching on presentation skills prior to the defense. Finally, seniors were encouraged to make presentations of their thesis work in progress at both undergraduate and professional conferences, including the ULL Undergraduate Research Conference, the University of Louisiana System Academic Summit, and NSU's Research Day.
- In Measure 2.1, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. The faculty discussed ways to calibrate their assessment methodology, including genre and disciplinary conventions. These changes were intended to improve the students' ability to write more effectively for an audience in their discipline.
- In Measure 2.2, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. The faculty re-introduced more incremental time deadlines for the AC 2023-2024 cohort. Time management problems were also addressed in SLSC 4000 and in the thesis methods course.

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- In Measure 3.1, the faculty implemented the following changes in AC 2023-2024. The AACU *Critical Thinking* Rubric was utilized.
- In Measure 4.1, in addition to emphasizing the importance of completing the sample exams on time, the grading scale counted all four sample exams in the final grade. In addition, since difficulty on the ANOVA project (which is not included on the final) was also related to lower performance on the final, additional support was provided to students who score below 90% on the project.
- In Measure 4.2, in SMAT 2000, basic material on college algebra topics was covered at a faster pace if students did well on the homework assignments and sample exams. This gave students additional time to spend on more difficult topics at the end of the semester. Students rebelled against working problems in small groups, but participated in in-class problem solving individually, which led to increased dialog over problem-solving techniques. In SMAT 2010 applications were grouped according to common themes, resulting in fewer discrete units of material and more obvious connections between topics. The unit on applications of linear algebra was expanded.
- In Measure 5.1, faculty provided additional guidance on how students could make connections for themselves. Clearer instructions were given in writing for the final essay in terms of specific expectations for an “A level performance” to help students more clearly articulate their research questions and produce works of appropriate (and typically narrower) scope. The target was for 75% of students to earn an average score of 3.0 or better using the AACU Values rubric for Inquiry and Analysis. Examining each rubric item individually, only 40% earned a 3 or better on all six items. The best performance was for *Topic Selection* with 100% of students earning a score of 3 or better (80% earned a 4). The next best results were for *Existing Knowledge*, *Design Process*, and *Analysis*, with at least 80% of students earning a score of 3 or better. The weakest areas were for *Conclusions* (60% scored 3; there were no 4s) and *Limitations and Implications* (40% scored a 3, there were no 4s).
- In Measure 5.2, this new measure was added which states, “Using the ‘interdisciplinary’ courses in the Humanities and Social Thought Concentration of the Liberal Arts Major, students will be assessed on a question which asks them to Identify connections within and between the sciences, mathematics, humanities, and the arts. The list of courses currently includes SART 3820; SECO 3840, 3850, 3860; SHIS 3700, 3710; SLSC 3800, 3810, 3820, 3830, or 4820; or SPHI 3910. As a degree requirement, these courses are offered on rotation every year. The target is that 75% of students will earn an average score of 3.0 or better using the AACU Values rubric for Inquiry and Analysis.” This measure will be assessed for the first-time during AC 2024-2025.

Assessment Cycle AC 2023-2024

- In Measure 6.1, this is the first academic cycle for this measure to be instituted.
- In Measure 6.2, AC 2024-2025 will be the first academic cycle for this measure to be used.

Plan of action moving forward:

- **SLO 1.** Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results and to drive the cycle of improvement, faculty will devote more class time to preparing students for the final presentation. This should be reflected in course syllabi, where at least one day of class time will be reserved for the discussion and practice of presentation skills.
- **SLO 2.** In AC 2024-2025, thesis students will be required to make research presentations at the ULL Undergraduate Research Conference (or equivalent venue) in the fall as part of their thesis grade. This measure is intended to encourage students to complete their assignment deadlines and more quickly get their projects off the ground.
- **SLO 3.** To address the inconsistencies in ratings from professor to professor, course faculty will be tasked with improving data collection. This may include having the answers assessed by a single faculty member, assigning multiple raters to grade each paper or discussing their approach to rating student performance on the assignment in advance with the aim of employing a common or more coherent standard of success. Given the importance of the question for assessment purposes and the concurrent need to encourage greater student reflection, it would be optimal to develop a mid-semester stand-alone assignment.
- **SLO 4.** In addition to emphasizing the importance of completing homework assignments in a timelier manner in all three target courses, students with weaker preparation in college algebra will be encouraged to take Applied Calculus more seriously and to address gaps in their background. While most students in science and business majors enter the College with adequate preparation to be successful in Applied Calculus 1 and 2, first-year students may not be able to recognize they need to do additional work to prevent falling behind. Thus, a prerequisite of 3 hours of math will be added to SMAT 2000. Pre-registration advice will also be required for students seeking permits to enroll in this course without official academic credentials.
- **SLO 5.** in AC 2024-2025, faculty will provide renewed guidance on writing a complete essay, including providing an effective conclusion and discussing the limitations and implications of their analysis. This may be done by requiring an outline or other details as part of the required proposal for the essay. Faculty will continue to provide guidance in such areas of analysis. In the next assessment cycle, the College will add a new metric to address interdisciplinarity.

Assessment Cycle AC 2023-2024

- **SLO 6.** Our initial assessment of this SLO indicates that our students are not yet achieving proficiency in this area, especially in their areas of specialization. More explicit instruction in the entire cycle of information literacy will be incorporated into instruction for the senior thesis, rather than emphasizing only the process of finding scholarly sources using our library resources.