Assessment Cycle 2024 - 2025

Program: Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (220)

College of Arts and Sciences

Prepared by: Samantha Culver Martin   **Date: 05/27/25**

Approved by: Francene J. Lemoine   **Date: 06/13/2025**

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 unequaled 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.

Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts Program Mission Statement: Recognizing the value of special programs for students with unusual backgrounds and abilities, this program is responsive to today's students. 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 BALA 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.

(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 a Bachelor of Liberal Arts (BALA) degree are factored into, as appropriate, the assessment of student learning outcomes.

Student Learning Outcomes: Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts

SLO 1. Students will demonstrate appropriate writing skills.

Course Map: Tied to course syllabus objectives

IDS 4020: Perspectives / Senior Seminar (all sections, senior year)
IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar (all sections, senior year)

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

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the ideal target was met as 17/17 (100%) students earned the target score on the final resume submission. The AC 2023-2024 percentage is attributed to the change that all students were required to highlight in 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 the importance of action verb usage for their final resume submission.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the course steward and instructors implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025. The grading rubric was revised to include a couple of additional terms and conditions if the student makes three or more spelling and grammar mistakes on the final resume. This will require (1) resubmission and (2) an automatic 15-point deduction on this 40-point assignment.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target was met, with 22 of 23 students (95.65%) scoring 75% or higher on the assessed assignment.

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Based on AC 2024-2025 results analysis, the following changes will be made to drive improvement in AC 2025-2026. Resume resources and rubric will be updated to reflect modern, relevant resume practices (e.g., no full address in resume header; ATS-compatible language; teach three Cs of clear, concise, consistent; LinkedIn connectivity; etc.) A new lecture video will be recorded to help facilitate learning.

Measure 1.2 (Direct – Knowledge)

<u>**Description:**</u> Students will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by writing a professional cover letter.

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

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

<u>**Implementation Plan (timeline):**</u> Each semester

<u>**Key/Responsible Personnel:**</u> Instructor of IDS 4020

Findings: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the target was met regarding the construction of a cover letter, with 17 of 17 students (100%) earning 75% or higher. The students were required to submit a first draft in which they clearly stated the position title they were applying for (as opposed to generated, generic letters). Additionally, the assignment required that the advertised position the student applied for be posted/supplied on the next page, which eliminated students applying for non-advertised jobs.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the course steward and instructors implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025. The AC 2024-2025 cover letter grading rubric introduced a new condition of three or more spelling and grammar errors, which will require (1) resubmission and (2) an automatic 10- point deduction on this 25-point assignment.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target was met with 21 of 23 (91%) students scoring 75% or higher on the assignment.

Decision: In AC 2024-2025 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026, the course steward will drive continuous improvement by requiring students to mark specific sections of their cover letter draft. Students will copy their cover letter draft and highlight sections to clarify intention. (1) In yellow, students will highlight their introduction with name, current position, and degree, (2) In italics, students will outline their goal for applying to the position, and (3) In bold, students will outline their

previous experience, skills, and what makes them uniquely qualified for the position. Requiring students to highlight the different parts of their paragraphs will help ensure they meet the criteria according to the rubric. An example will be provided to help students understand the amended instructions.

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 needed for their chosen career.

Acceptable Target: Ninety-five percent (95%) of students earn a score of 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 (90%).

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: Instructor of IDS 4030

Findings: Target was not met

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the target was met with 17 of the 17 (100%) students earning at least 90% on the assessed assignments. To drive improvement, instructors required all students to submit a mandatory assignment of their first paragraph, which included the three soft skills they addressed in their paper. This edit reflected a change in the rubric, and the target was increased. The target was updated to "90% (formerly 80%) of students earned a score of 80% or higher on the assignments assessed using an established rubric."

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the course steward and instructors implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025. To enhance the quality of the assignment, the instructors still required all students to submit an earlier, mandatory assignment of their first paragraph, which included the three soft skills they addressed in their paper. Instructors reiterated the importance of this early assignment in the assignment instructions. Feedback was provided to students earlier, helping them to construct their papers concisely with fewer difficulties. This edit was reflected in an adjustment to the grading rubric and the assignment instructions. The target was increased to 95%. Students often struggle with APA formatting and reflection of their soft skills in this assignment.

Despite these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target was not met (17/21 students = 81%).

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was not met as only 81% of all students earned the target score. Based on the analysis of AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025- 2026, the course steward will update the accompanying APA quiz to require a minimum score achieved of 5 full points (100%). This will help students who lose points on formatting issues on their first paragraph and final paper. Existing soft skills resources will be updated.

Assessment Cycle 2024 - 2025

SLO 2. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills.

Course Map: Tied to the course syllabus objectives

IDS 4020: Perspectives / Senior Seminar (all sections, senior year)
IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar (all sections, senior year)

Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill) IDS 4020

<u>**Description:**</u> Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by completing several discussion board forums throughout the capstone course.

<u>**Acceptable Target:**</u> Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce three discussion board posts that earn a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

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

<u>**Implementation Plan (timeline):**</u> Each semester

<u>**Key/Responsible Personnel:**</u> IDS 4020 faculty member

Findings: Target was not met

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met (13/17 students = 76%). In AC 2023-2024, the course steward and instructors required that forum posts must have the following: (1) a minimum word requirement; (2) be well-organized, concise, and easily understood; and (3) a minimum response to at least two other students' posts.

Based on the results of the AC 2023-2024 analysis, the course steward and instructors implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025. Students were required to complete all discussion board posts, complying with the following enhanced instructions:

   (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.

Additionally, the instructors labeled and highlighted the three previously mentioned requirements in the discussion board thread. Instructors reinforced the assignment description of completing the discussion boards accurately. Maximum points were increased from 60 to 90 points to help elevate the importance of these three discussion board assignments. Despite these changes, the students still struggled with following instructions for the forum posts and engaging with the discussion material.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target was not met (18/23 students = 86%).

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was not met (86%). Although the target was not

met, it is relevant to note that there was a 10% increase between AC 2023-2024 (76%) and AC 2024-2025 (86%). Based on the analysis of these results, in AC 2025-2026, the course steward and instructors will drive improvement by creating a rubric for each discussion board to show clearly how points will be distributed. (e.g., for a 30-point discussion board, students will see that (1) 20 points will be awarded for answering the prompt in a well-organized, concise way, (2) 5 points will be awarded per response to classmates, and (3) 5 points will be awarded for turning the posts in on time). Based on the pattern of unmet targets in previous AC years, the acceptable target will be lowered to 85% for AC 2025-2026.

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: Eighty percent (80%) 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 2023-2024, the target was not met as 11/17 students (65%) scored 16/20 total points on their respective soft skills discussion board assignment. Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the course steward and instructors implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025 to help drive improvement. Students were still required to complete all discussion board posts, complying with 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.

Additionally, the instructor labeled and highlighted these three previously mentioned requirements in the discussion board thread. Instructors reinforced the assignment description of completing the discussion boards accurately. Finally, the maximum possible points were increased from 60 to 90 points to drive home the importance of these three discussion board assignments. Students still struggled with completing the forum posts within the required parameters and turning the assessed assignment in. Three (3) out of the 6 Soft Skills discussion board answers below 80% were never submitted, resulting in scores of zeroes.

As a result of these changes in AC 2024-2025, the target was not met (15/21 students = 71%).

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Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of these results, in AC 2025-2026, the course steward will drive improvement by creating rubrics for discussion boards to show students distinctly where points will be deducted. Having concise instructions with a clear rubric will help students address issues that result in a deduction of points.

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 to reflect on and discuss their capstone and overall undergraduate experience.

Acceptable Target: All (100%) students will produce a score of 25/30 points, earning at least eighty-five percent (85%).

Ideal Target: All students will pass the assessments with a score of at least eighty-five percent (85%).

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: IDS 4030 faculty member

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the target was met with 17/17 (100%) students who scored at least 85% on their final reflective essay. The course steward made a few modifications to enhance student learning. Students addressed the three significant lessons learned from their capstone experience (increased from only one lesson learned). Additionally, the students described one area/topic the instructor should expand on to improve the course.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the course steward and instructors made changes in AC 2024-2025. Instructors used the same assignment delivery format, addressed the need for additional student feedback (requiring 3 lessons learned and one topic to expand on), and kept the final reflection assignment mandatory. The acceptable target was increased to 100% (100% of students to produce a score of at least 85%).

As a result of these changes in AC 2024-2025, the target was met (20/21 students = 95%).

Decision: In AC 2024-25, the target was met (95%). Based on the analysis of these results, in AC 2025-2026, the course steward and instructors will drive improvement by providing assignment instructions earlier in the semester. As mentioned previously, students struggle with identifying significant lessons learned from the capstone. Assigning the reflection essay earlier in the semester will give students additional time to consider the course material and assignment requirements.

SLO 3. Students will identify potential career opportunities.

Course Map: Tied to the course syllabus objectives.
IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar

Measure 3.1. (Direct – Knowledge)

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

Acceptable Target: Eighty-five (85%) percent of the students will 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 met.

Analysis: In AC 2023-2024, the target was not met with 82% (14/17) of assessed BA LA students successfully identifying relevant career networking agencies via their IDS 4030 class assignment with a score of 85% (or higher). One identified issue is students struggle with providing a point of contact for the network assignment. To address the issue and drive improvement, instructors explained the use of a point of contact and how necessary this information is in the "real" world. Students were required to identify a specific point of contact (first name, last name, job title).

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the course steward and instructors implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025. The course steward tailored the career network assignment directions to clarify instructions for point of contact name and job title. The same adjustment was made for graduate programs. In addition, the point value increased from 20 to 30 points to drive home the importance of the networking assignment.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2024-2025, the target was met (18/21 students = 86%).

Decision: In 2024-2025, the target was met (86%). Based on the AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026, the course steward and instructors will implement the following to drive improvement. The course steward will upload additional resources on the importance of networking and how to network for career building and exploration. Traditional-age college seniors may be networking outside of the University for the first time and older, non-traditional students may be out of practice with building a network (e.g., due to lengthy breaks in working, having worked at only one location for a long time, etc.). A blank template will be made available for use that emphasizes each requirement and encourages full participation from the student.

Measure 3.2. (Direct - Knowledge)

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

Acceptable Target: Eighty-five percent (85%) 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

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2023-24, the ideal target was met at 100% (17/17 students). The course steward assigned the interview 3 weeks in advance with periodic reminders. The instructors reminded the students several weeks prior to the due date of this assignment and gave the students an opportunity to ask any clarifying questions.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the course steward and instructors implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025. Instructors assigned the interview 3-4 weeks in advance. Additionally, students were instructed to e-mail the instructor and/or participate in a discussion board with details regarding their informational interviewee and details regarding the interviewee's career (or graduate program). Students still tend to struggle to submit this assignment on time and demonstrate an understanding of their chosen career field and what lessons were learned by interviewing someone in their chosen field.

As a result of these changes in AC 2024-2025, the target was met (18/21 students = 86%).

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was met (86%). Based on the AC 2024-2025 result analysis, in AC 2025-2026, the course steward and instructors will make the following changes to drive the cycle of improvement. An additional component will be added to the instructions that will require a set of five specific questions to answer in paragraph format. These questions will help students reflect on their informational interview including the content provided by the interviewee and how it impacts the career field they may pursue. For AC 2025-2026, the assignment will also be amended to require APA format.

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 (90%) 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.

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Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: IDS 4030 faculty member

Findings: Target was met

Analysis: In AC 2023-24, the ideal target was met at 100% (17/17). Students were partnered with peers who had similar career or graduate school interests and actively engaged, listened, and mentored each other through the mock interview process. Students took turns in both the roles of interviewer and interviewee.

Based on the analysis of the AC 2023-2024 results, the course steward and instructors implemented the following changes in AC 2024-2025. Instructors paid close attention and graded accordingly for unprofessional interview attire, interview location, and interview etiquette (e.g., no pillows in laps). The grading rubric was adjusted to include an additional ten points to professional attire and an appropriate online setting.

As a result of these changes in AC 2024-2025, the target was met (22/23 students = 95%).

Decision: In AC 2024-2025, the target was met. Based on the analysis of AC 2024-2025 results, in AC 2025-2026, several changes will be made to drive continuous improvement. Students will be given updated interview resources. Up to date methods for career interviewing (i.e., STAR method) will be enforced in the assignment instructions and a lecture video will be recorded. Providing clear methods for answering interview questions will help with student nervousness and allow for concise, intelligent answers. Additionally, a time limit of a minimum of 5 minutes per interview will be implemented. Some students finish their interview questions in under 3 minutes and do not allow enough time to fully engage with the interview practice.

Comprehensive summary of key evidence of improvements based on analysis of results. The following reflects all the changes implemented to drive the continuous process of seeking improvement in AC 2024-2025. These changes are based on the knowledge gained through the AC 2023-2024 results analysis.

- In Measure 1.1, the grading rubric was revised to include a couple of additional terms and conditions; one to include three or more spelling and grammar mistakes on the final resume required (1) resubmission and (2) an automatic 15-point deduction on this 40-point assignment.

- In Measure 1.2, the cover letter grading rubric was revised to include a new condition - three or more spelling and grammar errors will require (1) resubmission and (2) an automatic 10-point deduction on this 25-point assignment.

- In Measure 1.3, instructors provided the students with feedback, ensuring that their students have a successful start on their mandatory first paragraph assignment in which they introduce the three soft skills. This edit was reflected in an adjustment to the grading rubric. The target increased to 95%.

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- In Measure 2.1, students were required to complete all discussion board posts, complying with 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 student posts. Additionally, instructors labeled and highlighted these three previously mentioned requirements in the discussion board thread. The instructor reinforced the assignment description of completing the discussion boards accurately. Total points were increased from 60 to 90 points.

- In Measure 2.2, the course steward and instructors drove improvement by requiring students to complete all discussion board posts, complying with the following: (1) a minimum word requirement; (2) be well-organized, concise, and easily understood; and (3) students must respond to at least two other students' posts. Instructors labeled and highlighted these three previously mentioned requirements in the discussion board thread, reinforcing the assignment description and the importance of completing the discussion boards accurately.

- In Measure 2.3, the same assignment delivery format was used; however, instructors redesigned the scaffolding assignments to help the students identify which experiences they wanted to highlight earlier in the semester. Additionally, the course steward increased the acceptable target to 100%.

- In Measure 3.1, the course steward and instructors redesigned the career network assignment to ensure students were aware of the assignment directions. Instructors required all students to (1) identify a specific point of contact (first name, last name, and job title) to lessen the number of students giving vague or incomplete answers. The same adjustment was made for graduate programs. In addition, the point value of the assignment increased from 20 to 30 points to help convey the importance of the assignment.

- In Measure 3.2, the course steward and instructors added specificity to the interview. The project was assigned 3-4 weeks in advance. Each student was instructed to email the instructor at least one week in advance with details about who the interview will be with and what the career (or graduate program) is. Instructions were added during week two of the semester for the student to email the instructor in advance to share the details of the interview the student planned to conduct.

- In Measure 3.3, instructors paid special attention and graded accordingly to surroundings and details in the interview video (i.e., sloppy interview attire, interview on bed, pillow in lap, were not allowed). The grading rubric added ten additional points to evaluate business casual attire and an appropriate online setting.

Plan of Action Moving Forward: During AC 2025-2026, faculty will implement the following to drive further improvements to enhance the BA LA program's student learning outcomes based on the results analyzed from AC 2024-2025:

- In Measure 1.1, Resume resources and rubric will be updated to reflect modern, relevant resume practices (e.g., no full address in resume header; ATS-

compatible language; teach three Cs of clear, concise, consistent; LinkedIn connectivity; etc.) A new lecture video will be recorded to help facilitate learning.

- In Measure 1.2, the assignment will be amended to require students to identify specific sections of their cover letter draft. Students will be instructed to copy their cover letter draft and highlight various sections to clarify intention. (1) In yellow, students will highlight their introduction with name, current position, and degree, (2) In italics, students will outline their goal for applying to the position, and (3) In bold, students will outline their previous experience, skills, and what makes them uniquely qualified for the position. Requiring students to highlight the different parts of their paragraphs will help them write with intention and ensure they meet the criteria according to the rubric. An example will be provided to help with instructional clarity.

- In Measure 1.3, the accompanying APA quiz will be updated to require a minimum score received of 5 full points (100%) before submitting their first paragraph assignment. This will help students who lose points on APA formatting issues on their first paragraph and final submission. Existing soft skills resources will be updated.

- In Measure 2.1, a clear rubric for each discussion board will be made to show clearly how points will be distributed. (e.g., a 30-point discussion board, students will see that (1) 15 points will be awarded for answering the prompt in a well-organized, concise way, (2) 5 points will be awarded per response to classmates, and (3) 5 points will be awarded for turning the posts in on time. Based on a pattern in previous AC years, the acceptable target will be lowered to 85% for AC 2025-2026.

- In Measure 2.2, a rubric will be created for the Soft Skills discussion board to show students distinctly where points will be awarded or subtracted. Having concise instructions with a clear rubric will help students address all prompts.

- In Measure 2.3, instructors will provide assignment instructions earlier in the semester. Students often struggle with identifying significant lessons learned from the capstone. Having the instructions listed earlier in the semester will give students additional time to consider the assignment requirements.

- In Measure 3.1, The course steward will upload additional resources on the importance of networking and how to network for career building and exploration. Traditional age college seniors may be networking outside of the University for the first time and older, non-traditional students may be out of practice with building a network (e.g., due to lengthy breaks in working, having worked at only one location for a long time, etc.). A blank template will be made available for use that emphasizes each requirement and encourages full participation from the student.

- In Measure 3.2, an additional assignment component will be to the instructions that will outline five questions to answer in paragraph format so that students may better reflect on their interview and how it impacts their career exploration. This assignment will also be amended to require APA format.

- In Measure 3.3, Students will be given updated interview resources. Up to date methods for career interviewing (i.e., STAR method) will be enforced in the assignment instructions and a lecture video will be recorded. Providing clear methods for answering interview questions will help with student nervousness and allow for concise, intelligent answers. Additionally, a time limit of a minimum of 5 minutes per interview will be implemented. Some students finish their interview questions in under 3 minutes and do not allow enough time to fully engage with the interview practice.