

Assessment Cycle 2018 – 2019

Bachelor and Associates of General Studies (733 & 734)

College: Arts and Sciences

Prepared by: Steve Hicks

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Approved by: Greg Handel

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, Student-oriented institution that is committed to the creation, dissemination, and acquisition of knowledge through teaching, research, and service. The University maintains as its highest priority excellence in teaching in graduate and undergraduate programs. Northwestern State University prepares its Students to become productive members of society and promotes economic development and improvements in the quality of life of the citizens in its region.

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.

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

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

- (1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the program coordinator;
- (2) The program coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes;

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- (3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the professional staff advisors;
- (4) 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.
- (5) Based on the low-count of students and/or courses attempted at NSU, students who are pursuing an Associate of General Studies (AGS) degree are factored into, as appropriate, onto the assessment of student learning-outcomes.

Student Learning Outcomes: Bachelor of General Studies

SLO 1. Students will demonstrate appropriate writing skills.

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

Measure 1.1 (Direct – Skill)

Each fall and spring semester, students will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by creating an organized chronological resume per an established grading rubric. The target is to have 90% of BGS students develop a resume that meets a score of 75% or above, based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met

Analysis: In AY 2017-18 the target was not met (96/117 students = 82%). Based upon the analysis of the results, the aspirational target of 100% was adjusted to a more realistic target of 90%, partly based upon a handful of students who did not submit their assignment. In addition, for 2018-2019 the due date was pushed up one additional week, with a corresponding resume discussion board exercise to help students think critically about best practices in resume writing. Also, the rough draft grading rubric had several edits and more detailed feedback was provided. As a result, AY 2018-2019 the target was not met (97/117 students =83%).

Decision: Based on the analysis of the AY 2018-19 results, for AY 2019-20 year, the Director will drive continuous improvement by making the following changes. The Director will insert a statement on the course syllabi informing students non-submission will result in a failing grade for the course. This is a reasonable adjustment as this final chronological resume carries the most points of all course assignments and is one of the most important assignments of this capstone course. A second adjustment involves the sequencing of this assignment. The final resume submission deadline will be moved up so some of its content can be incorporated later in the term with the LinkedIn assignment. Knowing this information will be available to “real world employers” will motivate all students to produce better, quality work.

Measure 1.2 (Direct – Skill)

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Each fall and spring semester, students will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by writing a professional cover letter. The target is to have 100% of BGS students write a cover letter that meets a score of 75% or above (18/25 pts.), based upon established rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: AY 2017-2018 the target was not met. Based upon enrollment data, in 2018-19 the Director created three more sections (3 sections in fall '18 and 4 sections in spring '19). These smaller sections provided a better faculty/student ratio, from a 29:1 student/faculty ratio in 2017-18 AY to a 17:1 student/faculty ratio in 2018-19 AY. In addition, two new instructors were added in AY 2018-19, which likely caused a greater level of inconsistencies in student learning (subjective grading, despite rubric). Although there was a 4% increase to the target, the target was still not met.

Decision: Based upon the analysis of the AY 2018-19 results, for AY 2019-20, the Director will drive continuous improvement by making the following changes. The Director will restrict enrollment not to exceed a 20:1 student-to-faculty ratio. Like the professional resume assignment, the Director will incorporate a first draft submission to allow students the opportunity to obtain feedback and submit a more polished product. Since the target was not reached, it is the recommendation to adjust the target from 100% to 90%.

SLO 2. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills.

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

Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill)

Each fall and spring semester, 85% of students enrolled in IDS 4020 demonstrate critical thinking skills by completing a critical thinking case study assignment. A grading rubric will provide an evaluation and feedback. A score of 75% or above (18/24 points) on the rubric will demonstrate proficient critical thinking skills.

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: In AY 2017-2018 the target was not met. Based upon analysis of 2017-2018 results, in 2018-2019 the target was adjusted from 100% to 85%. What changes were made to improve student performance? As a result of these changes in AY 2018-19 the target was not met, by 1% point, as 84% of the students earned the minimum score. However, in Spring 2019, 62/65 enrolled students (95%) completed a capstone survey. What changes were made? The survey sought feedback to expand the 1-credit course into two 3-credit classes, and in turn, assist with BGS QEP planning. Of the nine main topics covered in the course, critical thinking was voted the *least meaningful*. However, the next survey question inquired “what new knowledge and/or skills did you acquire

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during IDS 4020”? Students responded that critical thinking was their third highest skill acquired. This may reveal students have a ‘disconnect’ regarding the significance of thinking critically in workplace.

Decision: Based upon the analysis of the AY 2018-19 results, for AY 2019-20, the director will drive continuous improvement by making the following changes. The Director will provide several more case studies options to select from. Since the program consists of a wide range of students at various stages in their academic careers, providing multiple case studies will allow them to address that may be more applicable. These additional assignments will help students consider critical thinking more meaningful and in turn, an important new (or enhanced) skill.

SLO 3. Students will identify potential career opportunities.

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

Measure 3.1. (Direct)

Each fall and spring semester, students enrolled in IDS 4020 will identify relevant career networking agencies, per a class assignment and established grading rubric. The target is to have 100% of the students earn an assignment score 80% or above, based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: In AY 2017-18 the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of the results, in 2018-19 the Director attempted to better pair this assignment in with the Informational Interview assignment. In Spring '19, 62 of 65 students (95%) completed an IDS 4020 capstone survey. Of the nine main topics covered in the course, the students voted that “identifying potential career opportunities” to be the 5th most meaningful topic. In AY 2018-19 the target was not met as 73% of students earned the minimum score.

Decision: Based upon the analysis of the AY 2018-19 results, in AY 2019-20, the Director will drive continuous improvement by providing a more comprehensive example so the students can access assignment format. This strategy will better link this networking assignment as the prerequisite to the informational interview project. It is recommended that the target be adjusted to 85%.

Measure 3.2. (Direct)

Each fall and spring semester, 100% of students enrolled in IDS 4020 will complete an informational interview assignment relevant to his/her career interests. The target is to have 100% of the students score 80% or above, based upon the rubric.

Findings: Target not met.

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Analysis: In AY 2017-18 the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of the results, in 2018-19 the assignment included an additional component of the best practices in experiential learning. In Spring '19, at the end of both A-term and B-term classes, 95% of all enrolled students participated in the end-of-course survey and voted the “Informational Interview” to be the 4th most meaningful topic. Despite these efforts, in AY 2018-19 the target was not met, as only 73% reached the target.

Decision: Based upon the analysis of the AY 2018-19 results, in AY 2019-20 the Director will provide a more comprehensive example so students can use this to model their efforts on. The instructor will also spend additional time explaining the components of the grading rubric to the students, so they understand what they are being scored on. Lastly, the target of 100% be adjusted to a more realistic 85%.

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

- In February 2019, after QEP discussions with Dr. Gentry, Mr. Brent and Dr. Gilson, the Director surveyed all spring 2019 students enrolled in IDS 4020 and 95% participated. The survey provided important feedback for ideas related to course expansion for BGS QEP planning. The data collected will help with needs analysis for proposal to CRC.
- AY 2018-19 introduced two new instructors to IDS 4020 and opened three new sections during AY 2018-19, totaling 7 sections of IDS 4020, compared to 4 sections the year before. This expansion provided a better faculty/student ratio (17:1 compared to 29:1 the year before).
- Added a reflection component to the Informational Interview assignment, which will help prepare students for more experiential learning activities.

Plan of action moving forward:

- The Director will add a 10-question online course expectation quiz, which will cover key aspects of syllabus. The quiz will ensure students are aware of all course expectations, including the class projects that are required to successfully complete the course.
- Will better strategically sequence lessons within IDS 4020 course, to engage and align topics and enhance participation.
- To enhance learning and final product of required cover letter, students will submit a draft #1 for evaluation, and later follow-up with final professional draft.

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- The General Studies team will modify existing class (IDS 4020) to three credits and propose new class (IDS 4030) at a fall 2019 CRC meeting.