

# Assessment Cycle

## Academic Year 2016 – 2017

### Program – Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts (non-Scholars' College)

College: Arts and Sciences

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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 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 a new program to the University assessment program. Previously this program fell under the Louisiana Scholars' College for assessment. However, as students migrated from the liberal arts program in the Scholars' College to the University the University accommodated their program desire allowing them to seamlessly transition to the University liberal Arts program. Therefore, beginning with the Academic Year 2017-18, data collection and analysis will occur specifically for this degree program.

Students seeking a degree in Liberal Arts, outside the Louisiana Scholars' College, must complete 68 hours within the 120 semester hour Liberal Arts curriculum, which include: 15 hours of courses at the 1000 and 2000 level from the College of Arts and Sciences, 27 hours of courses at the 3000 and 4000 level from the College of Arts and Sciences or from a concentration area, and 26 hours selected from a concentration area or from courses within the College of Arts and Sciences.

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The program of study will lead to critical thinking skills, information gathering and analysis, and communication skills in the following areas.

1. Students will take responsibility for developing and implementing an integrated (multidisciplinary) independent curriculum at the university level.
2. Students will develop skills in critical thinking through information collection/analysis that may include library, electronic, survey, field, studio and laboratory research methodologies as appropriate for their program of studies.
3. Students will develop written communication skills.

**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 Statement of Purpose is a 250-word essay written by the student at the beginning of the Degree Plan. It is composed after dialogue with an advisor that assists the student in outlining their degree plan options;
- (7) Program of Study: the POS is designed in collaboration with an advisor and serves as the official document that guides selection of courses;
- (8) Degree Completion Plan: The DCP serves as a semester by semester plan for the student and serves as a guide to registration each semester. The student will advise with their academic advisor at least once each semester;
- (9) The Final/Cumulative written document will be at least 500 words, and will synthesize the knowledge, skills, and dispositions learned throughout the Program of Study.
- (10) The rubric will serve as the evaluative tool;

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(11) A random sampling of documents will be completed each semester;

#### Student Learning Outcomes:

**SLO 1. Students will design, develop, and implement a program of study including a degree completion plan by semester. The plan will show both disciplinary (minor or concentration) courses and inter/multi-disciplinary connections within the COAS. The student will also write a *Statement of Purpose* in which they demonstrate their ability to articulate their goals in designing their Program of Study and Degree completion plan.**

#### Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge):

**Assessed in:** Program of Study; Degree completion plan; Written *Statement of Purpose*

**Details/Description:** Program of study upon initial matriculation into the degree; Degree completion plan upon initial matriculation into the degree; *Statement of Purpose* written and placed in advising file for evaluation throughout the degree program.

**Acceptable Target:** A rubric for evaluation purposes on the *Statement of Purpose* is attached. Acceptable target is 90% passing the assessments.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 100% passing the assessments

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** each semester

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Advisor and Dean

**Supporting Materials:** Program of Study; Degree Completion Plan; Written *Statement of Purpose*

Finding: Fall 2016: 3 applied for graduation; three completed degree requirements

Spring: 2017: 1 applied for graduation; one completed degree requirements

Analysis: Acceptable target met and exceeded for degree completion plan; *Statement of Purpose* target not met. It is expected that the student will meet with their advisor at least twice per semester and will present their proposed degree completion plan and statement of purpose, and will revise each as advised by advisor.

Action - Decision or Recommendation: This program is new to the University assessment program and will not have complete data until next year's assessment cycle. The *Statement of Purpose* will be required of all students who declare the B.A.L.A. starting in the Fall of 2017, and the *Statement* will be placed in the student's academic advising file.

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**SLO 2: Students will analyze, apply, and illustrate their ability to integrate skills including, but not limited to: library usage, electronic resource engagement, field experiences, and data and research collection through laboratory and field-based research. (Critical-thinking skills)**

**Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill / Ability):**

**Assessed in: Graduation Essay:** Students will write a Final/Cumulative document in which they synthesize (utilize critical thinking skills) the experiences and methodologies that assisted them in completing their program of study. Students will be required to indicate how their experiences tie to and have prepared them for advanced study or careers in their chosen field.

**Details/Description:**

Students will demonstrate knowledge through a written document at the end of the Program of Study (rubric for evaluation attached). *Completion Essay or*

**Acceptable Target:** Acceptable target: 90% of students passing the final written document according to rubric standards.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 100% passing

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** each semester/ongoing

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Advisor/Dean

**Supporting Materials:** Program of Study; Degree Completion Plan; Written *Statement of Purpose*

**Finding:** As this is part of a new assessment program, there is no data to support application of the Graduation Essay skill. However, given that all the students in the degree program successfully completed requirements for the degree, it is estimated that the acceptable target was met through papers, essays, field-experiences, data collection, and research in various courses throughout their degree plans.

**Analysis:** Acceptable target not evaluated, but likely met through skills demonstrated throughout the curriculum. It is expected that the student and advisor will keep checklists of each of the integrated skills in the SLO. The checklist will be kept in the student's folder. ß

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Starting in Fall 2017, students who apply for graduation will be required to complete the graduation essay that is submitted to their Academic Advisor and the Dean of the College. Feedback will be given, and a copy placed in their academic advising folder.

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**SLO 3: Students will demonstrate specific written communication and interpersonal skills.**

**Measure 3.1. (Direct – knowledge)**

**Assessed in:** Record of Advisement sessions; *Statement of Purpose*; *Final Written Document: Essay or Portfolio*

**Details/Description:**

Upon matriculation into the Degree program, students must meet with an advisor and complete the Statement of Purpose, the Program of Study, and the Degree Completion Plan. They will complete the Final/Cumulative Written document during their final semester.

**Acceptable Target;** Acceptable target is 90% students completing the requirements.

**Ideal Target:** Ideal target is 100% receiving a passing grade on the research paper portion of their grade.

**Implementation Plan (timeline):** each semester/ongoing

**Key/Responsible Personnel:** Advisor; Dean

**Finding:** Results are mixed as this is a new program in the assessment process. Advising session records and degree completion plans are available; the statement of purpose and final written document are not.

**Analysis:** Acceptable target not evaluated, but likely met through skills demonstrated throughout the curriculum and by record of successful completion of graduation requirements. It is expected that the student will submit to the advisor written communications and that the advisor will edit and work with students to improve writing and interpersonal skills.

**Action - Decision or Recommendation:** Starting in Fall 2017, students who apply for graduation will be required to complete the graduation essay that is submitted to their Academic Advisor and the Dean of the College. In addition, the academic advisor and Dean will complete an assessment of the student's portfolio, academic advising records, and connection of the cumulative assessments throughout the SLOs in the program. Feedback will be given, and a copy placed in their academic advising folder.

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### Rubric

#### Program of Study

- 1 point: Program shows coursework across multiple disciplines
- 3 points: Program indicates a disciplinary theme
- 5 points: Program integrates specific disciplinary themes that support professional and career goals

#### Statement of Purpose

- 1 point: Student will be able to articulate why they are seeking the Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts
- 3 points: Students will be able to articulate how their program of study relates to professional and career goals.
- 5 points: Students will have a clear thematic plan for each semester of study in which courses are grouped together to support one another.

#### Final/Cumulative Essay

- 1 point: Students are able to articulate the what they learned throughout the program
- 3 points: Students will be able to articulate what specific skills they learned throughout the program and how the skills challenged them
- 5 points: Students will be able to articulate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions learned, and how each ties specifically to their professional and career goals.

#### Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts Key Findings and Decisions

The majority of the SLOs are measureable and achievable. Because this program has been recently added to the university assessment cycle, more complete data will be available after each cycle, as well as a global picture after students complete the degree.

The academic advising piece will be crucial in success of these SLOs, and the advisor and Dean in tandem will be responsible for monitoring the assessment.