

Academic Year 2017 – 2018

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 the second year for this program to be assessed as part of the University assessment program. Previously, this program fell under the Louisiana Scholars' College for assessment. Students who wished to matriculate from the Scholars' College were allowed to seamlessly transition to the University Liberal Arts program. Therefore, beginning with the current Academic Year Assessment Cycle (2017-18), data collection and analysis commenced 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 includes: 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 leads 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: AY 2016-2017

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

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

AY 2017-2018

Fall 2017: 5 applied for graduation; 5 completed degree requirements

Spring: 2017: 5 applied for graduation; 5 completed degree requirements

Analysis: In AY 2016-17, the target was met and exceeded for the Degree Completion Plan (100%) but not met for the *Statement of Purpose*. The target was not met because the program was new to the University's assessment program. For AY 2017-18, the acceptable target was met and exceeded for all three: degree completion plan, program

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of study, and Statement of Purpose. Exceeding the target is evidence that students are meeting with their advisor a minimum of two times per semester. Through conversations with advisors, it is evident that students are accessing and utilizing their Degree Audit via Degree Works, and that they are utilizing the advising notes placed on the audit as a guide for registration and continued forward motion through the program. It is also evident that students in the program are responding to their proposed Program of Study as it pertains to their Degree Completion plans, and that their Statement of Purpose is a starting point for conversation between the advisor and student and utilized as a checkpoint throughout each semester. Based on the analysis of the results from 2016-2017 in 2017-2018 students were expected to continue to meet with their advisor at least twice per semester, will present their proposed degree completion plan and statement of purpose, and will revise each as needed and advised by advisor. Exceeding the target also indicates that students are likely engaged with their academic advisor more than twice per semester (likely through electronic mail and other communication), and this is having a positive influence on their success.

Decision: Based on the analysis and evidence, in AY 2018-2019 we will continue to implement the SLO as originally intended and will continue to provide additional opportunities for students to engage with their academic advisor, to take ownership and control of their degree plan and program of study, and to continue to use their Statement of Purpose as a tool to bring further meaning and evolution to their degree requirements. We will explore the addition of a written document at the midpoint (4th semester) of the degree, which will add an additional layer of assessment to gauge progress.

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*

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

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Key/Responsible Personnel: Advisor/Dean

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

Finding:

AY 2016-2017: no data collected; it was estimated that 100% of students met the target through final projects, essays, papers, and field experiences

AY 2017-2018

Fall 2017: 5 applied for graduation; 5 completed degree requirements

Spring: 2017: 5 applied for graduation; 5 completed degree requirements

Analysis: In AY 2016-17, data was not collected. However, it was estimated that 100% of students met the target based upon their completion of final projects, essays, papers, and field experiences that served as capstone experiences for the students. For AY 2017-2018, the acceptable target was met and exceeded due to more specific and regulated advising procedures being implemented: set checkpoints along degree completion timeline, the implementation of standard requirements, the addition of having graduating seniors being required to see their advisor after applying for graduation and adding one last checkpoint to remind and collect the Graduation Essay.

Decision and Recommendation: Implementation has gone as expected, indicating that we will continue with the SLO in its present form. In dialogue with advisors, it was recommended that due dates be implemented to assist in keeping students on track for timely submission of materials. It is also recommended that the rubric used for evaluation be considered for changes as this program grows.

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.

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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:

AY 2016-2017: 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.

***AY 2017-2018: Fall 2017: 5 applied for graduation; 5 completed degree requirements; 50% completed the Statement of Purpose
Spring: 2017: 5 applied for graduation; 5 completed degree requirements; 50% completed the Statement of Purpose***

Analysis: Results are still mixed due to the program being new. While all students who applied for graduation were successful, many of them matriculated into the program prior to implementation of these SLOs. Therefore, advising records are mixed with Degree Works playing a crucial role in communication and record keeping, and only 50% completed the Statement of Purpose (it was not required at the time of their matriculation).

Decision and Recommendation: This is a strong plan that will take several semesters to fully implement. Evidence shows that students enrolling in this program early in their academic career have complete advising records, are completing the initial Statement of Purpose, and Final Project. A continued emphasis will be placed on the recording of notes on Degree Works to assist in advising, and new ways to submit the Statement of Purpose and Final Project will be explored.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvements Based on Analysis of Results:

- The decision to utilize Degree Works as an advising platform has proven to be very beneficial for both the student in monitoring their academic progress but also for the advisor in their oversight role.
- By establishing student expectations early in the degree have been very successful, and the ability of the students to state their expectations of the degree and their experience both at the beginning and end of the program have been very successful.

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- Utilizing the Degree Works checklist is essential to student success in navigating their specific degree programs.
- The continuous engagement requirement between the student and their advisor is paramount in ensuring student success.

Plan of Action Moving Forward: Continued evaluation of the Statement of Purpose will need to be prominent. If students continue to matriculate into the BALA from the Scholars' College, an adjustment will need to be made as to the timeline for assessing it; students might be in their last few semesters of college which would skew the original intent of the Statement of Purpose, which is to get their perspective upon start, assist them in Degree planning, and gauge their readiness at the onset. The assessments are working quite well at this point and are appropriate for the degree. As we have evidence of need, we will adjust after careful examination of the data. We will also continue to evaluate the Rubrics used for evaluation and adjust them accordingly and driven by what the data tells us.

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 can articulate the what they learned throughout the program

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- 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 tie specifically to their professional and career goals.