

AY 2017-2018 Assessment

Program: Bachelor of General Studies (BGS)

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.

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 interests, background, 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 BGS program is as follows:

(1) Data from assessment tools (both direct – indirect, quantitative and qualitative) are collected and returned to the program coordinator;

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(2) The program coordinator will analyze the data to determine whether students have met measurable outcomes;

(3) Results from the assessment will be discussed with the professional staff advisors (we do not have program faculty). We do not 'own' many courses; therefore, we must assess our SLOs in collaboration with the program faculty/administrators in the following core disciplines: communications, English, mathematics and fine arts.

(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.

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 100% of BGS students develop a resume that meets a score of 75% or above, based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met

Analysis:

AY 2016-2017 target not met (70/96 students = 73%). The target was set to 100%. From a positive standpoint, many of these students crafted a professional, polished resume with organized, structured sections for the first time in their college career. One reason why students failed to meet the target was that this was the last assignment of the semester and some students were overwhelmed during finals week and did not submit (or did not submit the quality they were capable). As a result of analyzing this data, several adjustments were made to this project to better reach the target, including that the due date of assignment was pushed up one week to offset the heavy load during finals week, and the grading of the rough draft submission one month earlier, was more detailed with feedback.

In AY 2017-2018 the target was not met (96/117 students =82%), however, our analysis this year shows an increase from 73% to 82% (9 percentage increase to the target for this measure). Of the 117 total students this AY 2017-2018, the findings were:

- Ninety-six (96) earned a score of 75% or above (82%).

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- Eight students earned less than a 75% score, while 13 students did not submit.
- Of the students who submitted the assignment (96 of 117) 92% of them met the target of earning a 75% or above.

Although we see a significant increase in reaching the target for this measure, the target was not met due to 1) some students failing to submit this assignment, and 2) a hypothesized reason that there is a disconnect between expectations of faculty and understanding of those expectations by students, or lack of student use of the rubric in preparation of this assignment.

Decision:

In AY17-18 there was a 9% increase in students meeting the target for this measure, primarily as a result of adjusting the assessment due date to avoid conflicts with other academic obligations, as well as implementing an opportunity for faculty feedback to students before final assessment submission.

After two years of data with over 210 graded assignments, there was almost a 10 percent increase to the target, however the target has not yet been met. One problem is that a handful of students in each of the four sections do not submit the required work, and with 13 students not submitting the assignment this year, 100% target could not be reached. Since this chronological resume assignment is one of the most important assignments in this senior class, we plan to improve the percentage of students completing this assignment by incorporating faculty reminders in class/email, etc. The positive news is that 92% of the students who attempted the work met the target, therefore, we believe the overall percentage of students meeting the target will further increase as more students complete the assignment.

Measure 1.2 (Direct – Skill)

Each fall and spring semester, students will be required to demonstrate written communication skills by writing a cover letter per an established grading rubric. 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 rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met

Analysis:

In AY 2016-2017 the target was not met (56/58 students = 96%). The target was 100%. One of the positives included many students finding this assignment of applicable 'real world' value, which may attribute to one reason for the high percentage of good grades. The data was from A-term and B-term of spring '17 (58 total students). We speculated that a couple of students did not reach the target due to poor attention to detail, therefore in AY17-18 the instructor provided a different example assignment.

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In AY 2017-2018, the assignment was administered to all four sections (not just two sections) and the target was not met (92/117 students =79%). One of the positives to highlight was of all students who submitted their assignment, 92/101 students (91%) met the target of earning a 75% or above. One reason for a lower percentage of students hitting the target could be attributed to a new instructor this academic year and grading could have been more conservative. Additionally, the timing of the assignment could have been a factor as it was assigned during the final two weeks of the term. All in all, nine students earned less than a 75% score, which equates to only 7% of all students.

Decision/Action:

The AY 2016-17 cohort hit a higher target than AY 2017-18 (96% vs. 79%). However, in this last AY the grading rubric and instructor played a factor in the final percentages. Even though student performance does not appear to show improvement over the prior academic year, for students submitting this assessment, the percentage of students reaching the target under the more stringent rubric is similar to the percentage under last year's rubric.

This cover letter assignment (written communication) is the second or third most important assignment in this class and a handful of students in each of the four sections did not submit the required work. Therefore, in AY18-19 the instructor will insert a syllabus requirement that all students must submit this assignment to successfully complete the course. And it should be noted that 91% of the students who attempted the work met the target. For students submitting the assignment and not meeting the target, this could be due to poor attention to detail or lack of organization. To address these issues, in AY18-19 we will have students partner and provide a peer review to further improve the performance of students submitting this assignment.

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, 100% of students enrolled in IDS 4020 will demonstrate proficient critical thinking skills by completing a critical thinking assignment. A grading rubric will provide feedback and evaluation, with a score of 75% or above (18/24 points) on the rubric will demonstrate proficient critical thinking skills.

Findings: Target not met.

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Analysis:

In AY 2016-2017 the target was not met. 52/63 (82%) students earned a score of 75% or above. The target was set for 100%, but five students did not submit. Of the students submitting this assignment, 89.6% met the target of scoring 75% or higher on the assignment. One positive is considering that of the 58 students who submitted the assignment, 52 earned the target score (52/58=90%). The students not submitting their assignment was one of the reasons for not meeting the target. Based on an analysis of AY16-17 data and to drive student improvement in critical thinking, in AY17-18, this assignment was given to students slightly earlier in the semester to provide more time for submission, rather than having the assignment due during finals week. Additionally, and to better engage the students, a critical thinking video was introduced (required) with a follow-up five question quiz.

In AY 2017-2018 the target was not met as 88/117 (75%) students earned a score of 75% or above. Although the percentage dipped by 7%, the 2017-18 class size had almost doubled from 63 to 117 total students (4 sections this year, compared to 2 sections in 2016-17). Considering 15 students did not submit their assignment, the best rate of return possible was 102/117 (87%). In comparing the performance of students who submitted the assignment between the two academic years, an analysis of AY16-17 shows 89.6% of students meeting the target, while an analysis of AY17-18 shows 86% of students meeting the target. Again, similar to other exercises, this is likely due to a disconnect between the instructor's expectations and the comprehension of the students.

Decision

In AY 2016-17, 82% of the students reached the target while in AY 2017-18 there was a 7% decrease in students meeting the target for this measure (75%). One of the main reasons for this decrease stems from students not submitting their required work. The outstanding assignment submission rate tripled from 5 to 15.

There was a 7% decrease to the target, however the enrollment size doubled this last academic year (2017-18), while the non-submission rate increased. The critical thinking assignment has three parts (group Discussion Board participation, quiz after watching online video and private case study submission) and carries the third or fourth highest point value assignment in the class. This three-part module has been one of the very last exercises of the term. Therefore, in the upcoming AY, the instructor will re-align this module to the second or third week of the eight-week session to increase the number of students completing this assignment which is expected to have a positive effect on the students.

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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, 100% of students enrolled in IDS 4020 will identify relevant career networking agencies, per an established grading rubric. The target is to have 100% of the students score 80% or above, based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met

Analysis:

In AY 2016-2017 the target was not met (43/56 students = 77%). The target was 100% of students enrolled. Four students did not submit the assignment and 13 did not earn the target score. One of the important take-aways was that students enrolled in this class are in their last (or second to last) semester of enrollment and this exercise has relevant value to upcoming networking and career search. We speculated that some non-traditional students already working full-time in a career may have not found this assignment to be as applicable compared to traditional students who need to establish their network. Therefore, it was considered to provide students already working full-time in their career field an alternate assignment.

In AY 2017-2018 the target was not met (93/117 students =79%). Again, the target was 100%. This represents a 2% increase to the target as a result of providing the alternative assignment. This AY the assignment was administered to all four sections of the class, which equates to more than double the number of students from the previous AY. Also, the timing of the assignment (release date) is appropriate as one of these networks/contacts becomes a focus later in the term for an informational interview. Of the 117 total students this AY 2017-2018, additional findings reveal that 6 students earned less than 80%, while 18 students did not submit. One of the positives was that of the students who submitted the assignment, 94% (93 of 99) met the target measure of 80%. An analysis of the data between AY16-17 and AY17-18 shows many more students failed to submit the assignment this AY.

Decision

After two academic years of data, there appears to be some consistency in the target scores, 77% in AY 2016-2017, and 79% in AY 2017-2018. However, AY 2017-18 data shares that of the students who submitted their assignments, 94% of them met the target. This upswing is positive, compared to 83% from the AY 2016-17.

The establishing career network assignment is an important “lead-in” assignment since one of the agencies they list becomes the company they use for an informational interview assignment later in the semester. The instructor shared a couple anecdotal stories to highlight the importance of expanding their network. In AY 18-19 we will have

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students share a networking experiences with their peers on Discussion Board (DB). Based on an analysis of the AY17-18 data, it is evident that the main issue is student compliance with submitting this assignment. Therefore, the AY18-19 plan is to have all students post their exercise on DB as a strategy to make the students more accountable to the assignment.

Measure 3.2. (Direct)

Each fall and spring semester, 100% of students enrolled in IDS 4020 will complete an informational interview assignment with an employer 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.

Analysis:

In AY 2016-17 the target was not met ($55/60 = 92\%$). The target was 100%. Several students commented this assignment was of great value. One mentioned this exercise should be administered to all majors, perhaps in the sophomore year. AY 2016-17 was the first academic year that informational interviews were assigned. The grading rubric had less structure. One example included students who completed their entire interview via e-mail only. That is, they did not experience the 'give and take' that an in-person, Skype, or phone interview would offer. Therefore, to drive improvement in students' identification of career opportunities, the assignment directions had more specificity and some rubric modifications were made for AY 2017-18.

In AY 2017-18 the target was not met ($93/117 = 79\%$). The target was 100%. Some positive news includes that of the students enrolled (in 4 sections) who submitted the assignment, 94% ($93/99$) of students reached the target. This was the second academic year the assignment was required and a couple more resources were made available (sample sets of questions, links, closing-the-loop with a thank you, etc.). It is noted, however that 18/117 (15%) of students did not submit their assignment. The assignment was posted approximately 2-3 weeks before the due date. We speculate that several students are poor with time management or perhaps did not think this assignment was important, but mostly the former.

Decision:

The analysis above reflects that AY 2016-17 (92%) yielded much better results than AY 2017-18 (79%). However, changes to some of the assignment parameters and to the grading rubric could have made the assignment more challenging for the cohort in the second year. And it should be noted that 94% of the students who attempted the work, met the target.

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Therefore, in AY18-19 the instructor will modify the syllabus with a footnote requirement that states all students must submit this assignment to successfully complete the course. Based on the analysis and evidence of student learning, the faculty will build upon the students learning experience. At the completion of the assignment, to better close-the-loop on student learning, the module will require a written reflection of their learning.

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

- A graded rough draft resume submission was implemented a couple weeks earlier in the semester and was more detailed with feedback and grading rubric, thus better preparing students for the final draft;
- The due date of the final assignment was modified by one week (moved up), to offset the heavy load during finals week, which along with the above change, resulted in a 9% increase in student performance in the student learning outcome of written communication
- Provided an alternative assignment to the to better serve our diversity of students, which led to a 2% increase in student performance in the student learning outcome of identifying potential career opportunities
- New faculty were assigned to teach courses that are part of program assessment, as student enrollment in senior seminar class has doubled in the last two years, thus requiring more personnel to teach sections;
- More detailed rubrics and more detailed assignment instructions were provided

Plan of action moving forward:

- One of the IDS 4020 instructors transferred to another institution, which will provide a new instructor the opportunity to teach the class;
- The instructor will modify the syllabus, highlighting specific assignments that *must* be submitted to successfully complete the course to address the large number of students failing to submit assignments;
- To better close-the-loop on student learning particularly for students' written communication learning outcome, the Informational Interview module will require a written reflection of their learning;

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- The Bachelor of General Studies curriculum will be modified (i.e. addition of a required senior level class) within the next two years for QEP implementation, thus providing an opportunity for other student learning outcomes;
- Students will share networking experiences with their peers via a Discussion Board, thus enhance collaboration of their practices and interaction among peers, and provide additional accountability for assignment submission;
- This office is moving across campus (June '18) to a newly renovated office space in Watson Library. All team members will be in same designated area, which should enhance productivity, communications, etc.