

AC 2019-2020 Assessment

Associate and Bachelor of General Studies (733) & (734)

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

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2018-2019 the target was not met. Only 83% of the students (97/117) reached the target goal. It was speculated that students may have needed a little more time to complete this assignment. Based on this analysis, the course steward adjusted the due date one week later so the assignment corresponded with a resume discussion board exercise. Partnering these assignments assisted students and helped them make a connection between the two exercises, ultimately enhancing their resume submission. Additionally, more detailed feedback was provided during first draft grading. As a result, in AC 2019-2020 (97% of all students submitted, 117/121, and 101/121 earned 75% or above), the target was met.

Decision: In AC 2019-20 the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, in AC 2020-2021, the course steward will drive continuous improvement with a few minor adjustments. This coming year the BGS will implement a new 6-credit capstone. It will be emphasized how important this chronological resume assignment will be for both IDS 4020 and for the career portfolio project in the sequence class IDS 4030. Also, to weed-out common resume mistakes, all sections will engage in a resume quiz, prior to submitting their first draft. Additionally, faculty will use WebEx or Microsoft TEAMS platform, along with a presenter, to facilitate class discussion to emphasize relevance for career application, which in turn, will better engage the students.

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Measure 1.2 (Direct – Skill)

Each fall and spring semester, students are required to demonstrate written communication skills by writing a professional cover letter. The target is to have 90% 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 was met.

Analysis: In AC 2018-2019 the target was not met. There was some progress with a 4% increase toward the target of 100%, but not all students had been accountable and submitted their assignment. Based upon the analysis of the results of AC 2018-2019 data, the course steward adjusted the maximum enrollment level of each section from 17:1 ratio to a 15:1 ratio and adjusted the target to a 90% submission rate. The course steward and faculty made adjustments in AC 2019-2020 to enhance student learning, which included: mandatory first draft submission for feedback prior to the final draft, holding firm to 15:1 student/faculty ratio, and a modified target adjustment of 90%. As a result of these changes, 91% of all students submitted (110/121), and 104/121 earned a score of 75% or above. The target was met.

Decision: In AC 2019-2020 the target was met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, in AC 2020-2021 the course steward will implement adjustments to drive continuous improvement. As stated in measure 1.1 decision, the BGS will bring on a new 6-credit capstone in the upcoming AC 2020-2021. This cover letter assignment will be vital to both IDS 4020 and the career portfolio component in IDS 4030. To weed-out common cover letter mistakes, all sections will engage in a cover letter quiz, prior to submitting their first draft. Faculty will use WebEx or Microsoft TEAMS platform, along with a presenter, to enhance class discussions and better engage the students.

SLO 2. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills.

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

Measure 2.1 (Direct - Skill)

Students are required to demonstrate critical thinking analysis and skills by completing an online quiz in Moodle. The objective of this assessment is to prepare students to reflect, analyze and think critically. The quiz serves as a 'warm-up' exercise, so students can better understand expectations of the provided case study assignment (measure 2.2). The target is to have 90% students earn an 80% or above.

Findings: Target was not met.

Analysis: In AC 2018-2019, the target was not met. However, during that AC, the measure was mapped to a critical thinking case study assignment. In AC 2019-2020, the measure was mapped to an online quiz on Moodle. The critical thinking quiz was a new measure that

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was implemented this spring 2020 in two B-term sections. The rationale behind this assessment was to define critical thinking and better prepare students for the upcoming critical thinking case study assignment in measure 2.2. Within the two B-term sections, 30/35 students participated (86%) in this pilot assessment. Of the 30 participants, 29/30 earned an 80% or above. As a result, the target was not met.

Decision: In AC 2019-2020, the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, for AC 2020-2021, the course steward will drive continuous improvement to enhance student learning with a few revisions. IDS 4020 AC 2020-2021 will provide opportunity to administer the critical thinking quiz to all enrolled students, not just a pilot B-term sample (35/117), which tallied 30% of all students enrolled. Also, in IDS 4030, faculty will encourage critical thinking and problem solving, which will be measured in the final comprehensive project, the career readiness portfolio assignment. These changes will improve the student's ability to think critically (and problem solve) thereby moving continuous improvement forward.

Measure 2.2. (Direct – Skill)

Each fall and spring semester, 85% of students enrolled in IDS 4020 will 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) is the established target.

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2018-2019 the target was not met. Based upon analysis of this AC 2018-2019 data, the course steward and instructors provided several more critical thinking case study scenario options that students could select from. Additional options better engaged the students. As a result, students considered critical thinking to be more meaningful or applicable, and in turn, more important. As a result, AC 2019-2020 116/121 total students (96%) completed the assignment. Additionally, 113/121 (93%) earned a grade of 75% or above). As a result, the target was met.

Decision: In AC 2019-2020, the target was met. This was a first time the target had been met in the last three ACs. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, for AC 2020-2021, the faculty will drive improvement with the following revisions. In lieu of the critical thinking scenarios, critical thinking will be measured by the addition of frequent discussion board assignments. Students will be encouraged to reflect and then discuss key topics throughout both IDS 4020 and 4030 to demonstrate their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Also, in AC 2020-2021 all students will engage in final reflections at the end of both IDS 4020 and 4030 courses. These reflections will allow students to think critically and discuss the knowledge and skills gained from their capstone experience, but also from their overall experience at NSU. All discussion boards and final reflections will be graded using rubrics to measure student learning. These changes will improve the student's ability to think critically and problem solve through discussion board and reflection exercises, thus

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moving continuous improvement forward.

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 85% of the students earn an assignment score 80% or above, based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target was not met.

Analysis: In AC 2018-2019 the target was not met. Only 73% of all students earned the minimum assignment score. Based upon the analysis of the results, the course steward aligned this networking assignment with the Informational Interview assignment. Faculty shared an “A+” example with outstanding content and perfect formatting so all students had a sample to draw from. This strategy helped link this networking assignment as the prerequisite to the Informational Interview project. It was recommended that the target was adjusted to 85%. As a result of these changes, AC 2019-2020 had 114/121 student submission rate (94%). And 98/121 (81%) earned a score of 80% or above. Although there was an 8% jump, which showed progression, the target was not met.

Decision: In AC 2019-2020, the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, for AC 2020-2021, the faculty will drive continuous improvement by implementing some changes. This networking assignment will be ‘lifted’ from original IDS 4020 shell to the new IDS 4030 class. ‘Lifting’ this assignment to the second portion of the capstone experience will allow students to go into this assignment with a polished cover letter and resume, as well as being better prepared (chapter assignments, etc.) regarding what to expect in the hiring process. By ‘lifting’ this assignment to later in the capstone experience, students will feel more prepared and confident in their researching their potential employers to establish their career network and scheduling their informational interview (Measure 3.2).

Measure 3.2. (Direct)

Each fall and spring semester students enrolled in IDS 4020 will complete an informational interview assignment relevant to their career interests. The target is to have 85% of the students score 80% or above, based upon the rubric.

Findings: Target was met.

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Analysis: In AC 2018-2019 the target was not met. Only 75% of all students reached the target, thus five percentage points short. Based upon the analysis of the results, the course steward provided changes that included a more thorough, detailed example that students modeled from. Also, former survey monkey results were shared with students that informed them their peers had considered the Informational Interview a top five topic in the capstone. The target also got adjusted to a more realistic 85% goal (realistic vs. inspirational). As a result of these changes in AC 2019-2020 113/121 students submitted (93%), with 106/121 (87%) students that earned a score of 80% or above, and the target was met.

Decision: In AC 2019-2020, the target was met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, in AC 2020-2021, the faculty will drive continuous improvement by making the following changes. This assignment will also get 'lifted' from IDS 4020 to IDS 4030. The project will also be assigned earlier in the term, which will allow a larger window of time for students to establish an interview and then report findings. In addition, this assignment will be due in advance. In turn, the students will begin to think longer-term to establish a career map, rather than simply preparing with tunnel vision for first professional job. These changes will improve the student's ability to see a bigger picture regarding career mapping/planning.

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

- In December 2019, the QEP Steering Committee approved the BGS QEP proposal. In February 2020, the NSU's Curriculum Review Council approved the proposed changes for BGS senior year capstone. So affective AC 2020-21 IDS 4020 (3 credits) and IDS 4030 (3 credits) will provide a more comprehensive capstone experience for all BGS students.
- AC 2019-20 launched a record 8 sections of IDS 4020, with enrollment maximum at 15-16 students per section. Both IDS 4020 instructors gained an additional year of experience teaching this capstone.
- The course steward added a 10-question course expectation quiz, which covered key aspects of syllabus. The quiz ensured students were aware of all course expectations, including the class projects that are required to successfully complete the course.
- Paired/partnered assignments that helped students make a connection between two exercises, ultimately enhancing their resume submission.
- Required a mandatory first draft submission on cover letter with more detailed feedback to ensure a more polished and professional final draft.
- Course steward adjusted the order of a couple course lessons (strategic sequencing), which aligned topics, enhanced relevance, and cohesiveness.

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- A critical thinking measure was piloted successfully in the spring '20 B-term.
- Provided additional critical thinking case study options, which engaged higher participation rate.
- Targets were met for Measures 3.1 and 3.2, which was a first time in several years.
- Instructors shared an anonymous "A+" sample Informational Interview submission to serve as a guide.

Plan of action moving forward:

- After a successful five year run with IDS 4020 being a 1-credit capstone course, additional lessons/topics will be distributed over two 3-credit courses to enhance experiential learning.
- Faculty will use WebEx or Microsoft TEAMS platform, along with some guest presenters, to facilitate class discussions and better engage students.
- The goal for IDS 4020 and 4030 will be to continue to operate at a 15:1 (student/faculty) ratio.
- The director and faculty will continue dialogue and communication with Mr. Bob Jordan of QEP assessment committee for strategies and guidance to best assess experiential learning.
- More writing-based discussion board assignments and final reflections will be assigned. Grading will use updated rubrics to measure critical thinking and student learning.
- In lieu of the critical thinking assignment (measure 2.2), critical thinking will be measured by several Discussion Board assignments (rubrics have been created), as well as final course reflections. This will evaluate student's knowledge and skills gained from not only their capstone experience, but their experience at NSU as a General Studies major.
- IDS 4030's final assignment will require all students to assemble several documents to build their career portfolio.
- Near the conclusion of the first IDS 4030 course (December '20), this first pilot cohort will provide feedback for upcoming for Spring 2021 student and beyond.