

AC 2019 – 2020 Assessment

Bachelor of Arts – Liberal Arts

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 fourth year for this program to be assessed as part of the University assessment program. Previously, the program fell under the Louisiana Scholars' College for assessment. Students who wished to withdraw from the Scholars' College were allowed to transition seamlessly into the University's BA in Liberal Arts program. It was not until the 2017-2018 academic year that data collection and analysis commenced specifically for this degree program.

Students seeking a degree in the University's Liberal Arts program must complete 68 of the required 120 semester hours of Liberal Arts curriculum as follows:

- 15 semester hours of courses at the 1000 and 2000 level from the College of Arts and Sciences
- 27 semester hours of courses at the 3000 and 4000 level from the College of Arts and Sciences or from a concentration area
- 26 semester 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, and 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) The Program of Study is designed in collaboration with an advisor and serves as the official document that guides selection of courses.
- (8) The Degree Completion Plan serves as a semester by semester plan for the student and serves as a guide to registration each semester. The student will meet 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.
- (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. This 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):

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Description: Students will demonstrate an understanding of their degree program and how to most efficiently earn their degree by completing the following:

- Program of Study – upon initial matriculation into the program
- Degree Completion Plan – upon initial matriculation into the program
- Written Statement of Purpose – upon initial matriculation into the program and reviewed semesterly with academic advisor

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students will pass the assessments with a score of at least 5 (as described in the attached rubric).

Ideal Target: All (100%) students will pass the assessments with a score of at least 5 (as described in the attached rubric).

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: Advisor and Dean

Finding: Target Met

Analysis: In AC2018-19, the target was met with 4/4 (100%) of assessed students successfully completing the Program of Study, Degree Completion Plan, and Written Statement of Purpose to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. During this academic cycle, advising for this program was moved to the University's Academic Advising Center. Based on the above-described assessment results and the academic advising shift, it was determined that students should be provided with additional opportunities for engagement with their academic advisor and that they should take ownership and control of their degree plan and program of study while using their Statement of Purpose as a tool to bring further meaning and evolution to their degree requirements. Student/academic advisor engagement was also monitored and an increase in interaction was noted.

As a result of these changes which were implemented in AC2019-2020, the target was met with 90% of assessed students successfully completing the Program of Study, Degree Completion Plan, and Written Statement of Purpose to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. Student/academic advisor engagement, as demonstrated by number of interactions, was increased with 26 students communicating (face-to-face or virtually) with their academic advisor anywhere from one to nine times per academic year.

Decision: In AC2019-2020, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC2019-2020 assessment results, in AC2020-2021 academic advisors will continue to monitor student/advisor interactions or sessions. The advisors will also work more closely with the students as they develop their Degree Completion Plans to outline their completion to degree.

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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):

Description: Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills by completing a Graduation Essay 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 these experiences relate to and have prepared them for advanced study or careers in their chosen field.

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce a Graduation Essay that scores at least 5 (as described in the attached rubric).

Ideal Target: All (100%) students will pass the assessments with a score of at least 5 (as described in the attached rubric).

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: Advisor and Dean

Finding: Target met.

Analysis: In AC 2018-19, the target was met. This was likely due to the implementation of the following more specific and regulated advising procedures: (1) setting checkpoints along degree completion timeline, (2) implementing standard requirements, (3) requiring that graduating seniors meet with their advisor after applying for graduation, and (4) adding one last checkpoint to remind the students and collect their Graduation Essays. Based on the above-described assessment results, faculty decided to improve further student performance by implementing specific due dates to assist the tracking of student submissions. Additionally, faculty planned to use a revised rubric for evaluation of the Graduation Essay. Finally, with coordination of the degree being moved to the Academic Advising Center, faculty expected that there would more advisors readily able to advise and assist students through the process.

As a result, in AC2019-2020, the target was met with 100% of the students successfully completing the Graduation to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. Student submission was increased compared to AC2018-2019.

Decision: In AC2019-2020, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC2019-2020 assessment results, in AC2020-2021 academic advisors will continue to use specific due dates to prompt students of the requirement and to assist the tracking of student

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submissions. Additionally, faculty planned to use conduct a survey to determine which resources were most valuable for the synthesis of the writing.

Faculty will also begin offering to Liberal Arts majors two new courses IDS4020 (Perspectives/Senior Seminar) and IDS4030 (Career Readiness/Senior Seminar). These courses, which will encompass the experiential learning component of the BA in Liberal Arts degree will help students transition from student to professional by assisting them with the creation of resumes and job application cover letters as well as researching how to search for jobs, network, and develop the soft skills needed to succeed in today's workforce. The creation of writing samples in these courses will be used in future semesters to assess student's critical thinking skills.

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

Measure 3.1. (Direct – knowledge)

Description: Students will demonstrate specific written communication and interpersonal skills in their interactions with their academic advisors as well as with their Statement of Purpose and their Graduation Essay.

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce a Statement of Purpose and their Graduation Essay that scores at least 5 (as described in the attached rubric).

Ideal Target: All (100%) students will pass the assessments with a score of at least 5 (as described in the attached rubric).

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: Advisor and Dean

Finding: Target met.

Analysis: In AC2018-19, the target was met. This was likely due to the implementation of the following advising procedures that year: (1) setting checkpoints along degree completion timeline, (2) implementing standard requirements, (3) requiring that graduating seniors meet with their advisor after applying for graduation, and (4) adding one last checkpoint to remind the students and collect their Graduation Essays. Based on the above-described assessment results, faculty decided to improve further student performance by implementing specific due dates to assist the tracking of student submissions. Additionally, faculty revised the rubric for evaluation of the Graduation Essay. Finally, with coordination of the degree being moved to the Academic Advising Center, faculty increased the number of academic advisors readily able to advise and assist students on their academic journeys.

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As a result of implemented changes in AC2019-2020, the target was met with 100% of the students successfully completing the Graduation to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. Student submission was increased compared to AC2018-2019.

Decision: In AC2019-2020, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC2019-2020 assessment results, in AC2020-2021 academic advisors will continue to use specific due dates to prompt students of the requirement and to assist the tracking of student submissions. Additionally, faculty plan to provide more direct feedback on the effectiveness of communications between students and their advisors.

A continued emphasis will be placed on the recording of notes on Degree Works to assist in advising and on the importance of submission of required assessments. With the addition of more advisors in the Academic Advising Center, collection of data and monitoring of the assessments will continue to improve. However, if students continue to matriculate into the program late in their academic careers, student participation in the assessment process will continue to be a hurdle faculty must work to overcome.

Faculty will also begin offering to Liberal Arts majors two new courses IDS4020 (Perspectives/Senior Seminar) and IDS4030 (Career Readiness/Senior Seminar). These courses, which will encompass the experiential learning component of the BA in Liberal Arts degree will help students transition from student to professional by assisting them with the creation of resumes and job application cover letters as well as researching how to search for jobs, network, and develop the soft skills needed to succeed in today's workforce. The creation of writing samples in these courses will be used in future semesters to assess student's written communication and interpersonal skills.

Comprehensive Summary of Key Evidence of Improvement Based on Analysis of Results

For AC2018-2019 the academic advisors and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences examined the three measures for the three Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) of the BA in Liberal Arts programs. Decisions that were implemented in AC2019-2020 were as follows:

- Students were provided with additional opportunities for engagement with their academic advisor
- Students were encouraged/empowered to take ownership and control of their degree plan and program of study while using their Statement of Purpose as a tool to bring further meaning and evolution to their degree requirements.
- Student/academic advisor engagement was monitored and an increase in interaction was noted.
- Specific due dates for assessment submissions were implemented to assist the tracking of student submissions.

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- The rubric used to evaluate the Graduation Essay was revised rubric for evaluation of the Graduation Essay.
- More advisors in the University's Academic Advising Center were made available to advise and assist majors in the BA in Liberal Arts program.

The changes implemented in AC2019-2020, resulted in addressing concerns that were instrumental in the ability of students to meet the assessed outcome targets.

Plan of action moving forward

During the AC2020-2021, faculty will implement the following to drive further improvements in student achievement of the BA of Liberal Arts program Student Learning Outcomes:

- Academic advisors will continue to monitor student/advisor interactions or sessions.
- Advisors will work more closely with the students as they develop their Degree Completion Plans to outline their completion to degree.
- Academic advisors will continue to use specific due dates to prompt students of the assessment submission requirements and to assist the tracking of student submissions.
- Faculty will create and conduct a student survey to determine which resources the students found to be most valuable for the synthesis of their writing pieces.
- As faculty begin to implement the experiential learning requirement in the BA in Liberal Arts program, faculty will also begin offering to Liberal Arts majors two new courses IDS4020 (Perspectives/Senior Seminar) and IDS4030 (Career Readiness/Senior Seminar), which will help students transition from student to professional by assisting them with the creation of resumes and job application cover letters as well as researching how to search for jobs, network, and develop the soft skills needed to succeed in today's workforce.
- The new writing pieces created in the IDS4020 and IDS4030 courses will be used in future semesters to assess student's critical thinking skills.
- Faculty will continue to look for ways to improve the assessment process to include those students who matriculate into the program late in their academic careers.

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Rubrics

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.

Graduation Essay

- 1 point: Students are able to articulate 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.