

AC 2020-2021 Assessment

Associate and Bachelor of General Studies (733 & 734)

College: Arts and Sciences

Prepared by: Taylor Camargo Patrón

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Approved by: Francene J Lemoine

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Northwestern Mission. Northwestern State University is a responsive, student-oriented institution committed to acquiring, creating, and disseminating knowledge through innovative teaching, research, and service. With its certificate, undergraduate, and graduate programs, Northwestern State University prepares its increasingly diverse student population to contribute to an inclusive global community with a steadfast dedication to improving our region, state, and nation.

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 unequaled 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, backgrounds, 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.
- (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)

IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar (all sections, senior year)

Measure 1.1 (Direct – Skill) IDS 4020

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

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was not met (101/121 students = 83%). To enhance the quality of the assignment, in AC 2020-2021, the course steward discussed expectations via a recorded lecture, and moved the due date of the assignment to directly follow the cover letter assignment, allowing for two consecutive weeks to focus on professional writing. Students also completed a resume quiz, prior to submitting their resume draft, to correct common resume mistakes. Additionally, the final resume is a component of the career portfolio assignment due at the end of the capstone, which further reiterates the importance of producing a solid resume eligible for future use.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-2021 the target was not met. Data shows 83% (109/131) of students earned 75% or above.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022, the course steward will drive continuous improvement with course adjustments. Modifications will be made to the resume writing quiz to better align students with the expectations of their professional resume submission. In addition, the course steward will create a recorded lecture that will break down the different components of a resume, discuss tips and common mistakes, etc. Lastly, all IDS 4020 instructors will offer a 1–2-hour

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window during their office hours on the week the draft resume is due for resume review or assistance.

Measure 1.2 (Direct – Skill) IDS 4020

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 not met.

Analysis: In 2019-2020 the target was not met (104/121 = 85%). To enhance the quality of the assignment, in AC 2020-2021, the course steward discussed expectations via a recorded lecture, and continued with the requirement of a draft submission. Students also completed a cover letter writing quiz, prior to submitting their draft, to correct common cover letter mistakes. Additionally, the final cover letter is a component of the career portfolio assignment due at the end of the capstone, which further reiterates the importance of producing a solid cover letter template eligible for future use.

As a result of these change, in AC 2020-2021 the target was not met. Data shows 86% (113/131) of students earned 75% or above.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022 the course steward will make modifications to drive continuous improvement. Like the approach for the professional resume (Measure 1.1), the course steward will create a recorded lecture that will break down the different components of a cover letter, discuss tips and common mistakes, etc. In addition, all IDS 4020 instructors will offer a 1–2-hour window during their office hours on the week the draft resume is due for resume review or assistance.

Measure 1.3 (Direct – Skill) IDS 4030

In AC 2020-2021, the BGS implemented a new 6-credit capstone (IDS 4020 & 4030). In IDS 4030, the course steward introduced the topic of soft skills needed in today's workforce and assigned a corresponding paper in which students will identify the specific soft skills needed for their chosen profession and discuss strategies to strengthen them. The paper requires 3 pages minimum and APA formatting, which allows a bigger opportunity for students to strengthen their writing skills, especially for those planning on applying to graduate programs. The target is to have 90% of students develop a paper that meets a score of 80% or above, based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: Since AC 2020-2021 is the first year this target was implemented, there is no prior data to analyze. To reach the target for AC 2020-2021, the course steward provided numerous resources related to not only soft skills and the workplace, but specifically successful academic

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writing as well. Additionally, prior to the submission of this paper, students engaged in a class discussion in which they identify the meaning of soft skills and their personal strengths and weaknesses in this area.

As a result, in AC 2020-2021 data shows 87% (57/65) of students earned an 80% or above. Most deducted points on student submissions came from formatting errors.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022, the course steward will implement adjustments to drive continuous improvement. Students will be given additional resources on APA style writing and participate in an APA style quiz leading up to the submission of their soft skills paper. Formatting discussions will be added to allow students to better grasp proper, APA style formatting. Students will also be given a sample paper as a reference to have a better sense of content expectations.

SLO 2. Students will demonstrate critical thinking skills.

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

IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar (all sections, senior year)

Measure 2.1. (Direct – Skill) IDS 4020 & 4030

With the implementation of the 6-credit capstone in AC 2020-2021, the critical thinking case study was replaced with several group discussions geared towards reflective, critical thinking. Discussion topics are relevant to other assignments in the capstone to act as a precursor to larger assignments, and are designed to encourage independent, critical thinking as students must submit their initial post before they can view their classmates' post and engage in discussion. At 10-points each, for a total of 40 points, the target is to have 90% of students earn a 80% or above (32/40 points) or above, based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: Since AC 2020-2021 is the first year this target was implemented, there is no prior data to analyze. To reach the target for AC 2020-2021, the course steward provided a grading rubric to follow for all discussion posts and tied the topics of discussion to larger assignments in the capstone. This was to allow students to begin to think critically on the topics at hand and how to best approach completing the upcoming assignments. Knowing the weight of the larger assignments, plus the opportunity available to gain advice from other classmates before getting started, will encouraged full, in depth participation in all class discussions.

As a result, in AC 2020-2021 data shows 68% (90/131) of students earned an 80% or above.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, for AC 2021-2022, the course steward will drive continuous improvement by adjusting. Currently, all discussion boards combined only factor approximately 12% of a student's final grade. Therefore, many students do not participate in every single discussion prompt as they know they can afford to miss those points and

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still achieve their desired grade. Therefore, the point value of all discussion boards will be increased so that they weigh heavier on student's final grade.

Measure 2.2 (Direct) IDS 4030

With the implementation of the 6-credit capstone in AC 2020-2021, the critical thinking quiz was replaced with a final reflection essay, in which students are to reflect on and discuss their capstone and overall undergraduate experience. Students are not only evaluated on the language and appearance of their essay, but they are primarily evaluated on their ability to critically think and personally reflect on this experience. The target is to have 100% of students earn an 80% or above (12/15 points), based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target not met.

Analysis: Since AC 2020-2021 is the first year this target was implemented, there is no prior data to analyze. To reach the target for AC 2020-2021, the course steward provided a grading rubric for the final reflection essay. In addition, students engaged in a smaller reflection essay halfway through the capstone experience, as well as participated in a pre- and post-survey, to help them better reflect on their growth during the capstone experience.

As a result, in AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Data shows 95% (62/65) of students earned an 80% or above. Two of the three students who did not meet the target simply did not submit the assignment.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, for AC 2021-2022, the course steward will drive continuous improvement with revisions. The final reflection will become a mandatory assignment in both IDS 4020 and 4030. In addition, the reflection prompt will be adjusted from paragraph format and each question will be separated and numbered to help students ensure they are responding to and reflecting on all aspects of the discussion prompt.

SLO 3. Students will identify potential career opportunities.

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

IDS 4030: Career Readiness / Senior Seminar (all sections, senior year)

Measure 3.1. (Direct) IDS 4030

Each fall and spring semester, students enrolled in IDS 4030 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 met.

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Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was not met (98/121 students = 81%). Based upon the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, in AC 2020-2021, the course steward moved the assignment to the second portion of the capstone. Students approached this assignment more confidentially as they had already completed and polished a professional cover letter and resume and had discussed interview etiquette and techniques. The assignment served as a precursor to the informational interview assignment. In AC 2020-2021, the informational interview instructions were shared simultaneously with the career network assignment, to encourage students to use this assignment as an opportunity to research potential employers to interview.

As a result, in AC 2020-2021 the target was met. Data shows 93% (61/65) of students earned an 80 or above.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, for AC 2021-2022 the course steward will drive continuous improvement with the following changes. The career network assignment consists of the identification of a minimum of five potential employers/companies, and a closing paragraph indicating which of these five the student plans on reaching out to and why. The closing paragraph has been consistently overlooked on submissions, and so modifications to the instructions will be made to help avoid this oversight.

Measure 3.2. (Direct) IDS 4030

Each fall and spring semester, 100% of students enrolled in IDS 4030 will complete an informational interview assignment relevant to his/her career interests. The target is to have 85% of the students score 80% or above, based upon the rubric.

Findings: Target was met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020 the target was met (106/121 students = 87%). Based upon the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, in AC 2020-2021, the course steward moved the informational interview to the second portion of the capstone, allowing the opportunity for additional research and preparation before reaching out to potential employers. In addition, prior to the submission of the informational interview, students created a career map to encourage long-term thinking and planning relevant to their career goals.

As a result, in AC 2020-2021, the target was met. Data shows 90% (59/65) of students earned an 80% or above therefore, the target was met.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was met. Based upon the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022, the course steward will drive continuous improvement by providing a sample informational interview, as well as a list of sample questions. Modifications to the rubric will be made to make content and the demonstration of increased understanding the primary focus when grading.

Measure 3.3 (Direct – Skill) IDS 4020

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With the implementation of the new 6-credit capstone, in IDS 4020 the course steward introduced a mock interview assignment. Students will be paired with a classmate who shares similar career interest, and they will each host a mock interview for the other via Microsoft Teams. This will allow each student to not only gain experience in a formal interview setting but will also allow them to witness an interview from the other side, which will hopefully provide them the opportunity to identify additional “dos and don’ts” of the interview process. The target is to have 90% of students earn a score of 80% or above, based upon rubric guidelines.

Findings: Target was not met.

Analysis: Since AC 2020-2021 is the first year this target was implemented, there is no prior data to analyze. In an effort to reach the target for AC 2020-2021, the course steward provided numerous resources to aid in completing the assignment, such as a grading rubric and tips and technique on interviews and interview nerves. In addition, prior to the submission of their mock interview, students will engage in a group discussion on the interview process and general interview etiquette.

As a result, in AC 2020-2021 data shows 86% (113/131) of students earned an 80% or above.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 results, in AC 2021-2022, the course steward will drive continuous improvement with adjustments. With the help of additional course instructors, a sample mock interview will be recorded and provided to the students. The sample will not only showcase professional appearance and proper verbal and non-verbal communication but will also include common interview questions or scenarios to illustrate how to best respond/react. In addition, instructors will match mock interview partners based on having similar professional goals or experiences, to possible provide students a networking opportunity for the future.

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

- The course steward discussed expectations via a recorded lecture and moved the due date of the assignment to directly follow the cover letter assignment, allowing for two consecutive weeks to focus on professional writing.
- Students completed a resume quiz, prior to submitting their resume draft, to weed out common resume mistakes.
- The course steward discussed expectations via a recorded lecture and continued with the requirement of a draft submission.
- Students completed a cover letter writing quiz, prior to submitting their draft, to weed out common cover letter mistakes.
- The course steward provided numerous resources related to not only soft skills and the workplace, but specifically successful academic writing as well.
- Prior to the submission of a key paper, students engaged in a class discussion in which they identify the meaning of soft skills and their personal strengths and weaknesses in writing.

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- The course steward provided a grading rubric to follow for all discussion posts and tied the topics of discussion to larger assignments in the capstone.
- The course steward provided a grading rubric for the final reflection essay.
- Students engaged in a smaller reflection essay halfway through the capstone experience, as well as participated in a pre and post survey, to help them better reflect on their growth during the capstone experience.
- The course steward moved the assignment to the second portion of the capstone.
- The course steward moved the informational interview to the second portion of the capstone, allowing the opportunity for additional research and preparation before reaching out to potential employers.
- Prior to the submission of the informational interview, students created a career map to encourage long-term thinking and planning relevant to their career goals.

Plan of action moving forward:

- The resume writing quiz will be modified to better align students with the expectations of their professional resume submission.
- The course steward will create a recorded lecture that will break down the different components of a resume and cover letter, discuss tips and common mistakes, etc.
- All IDS 4020 instructors will offer a 1–2-hour window during their office hours on the week the draft resume and cover letter are due for resume review or assistance.
- Students will be given additional resources on APA style writing and participate in an APA style quiz leading up to the submission of their soft skills paper.
- Formatting discussions will be added to allow students to better grasp proper, APA style formatting.
- Students will be given a sample paper as a reference to have a better sense of content expectations.
- The point value of all discussion boards will be increased so that they weigh heavier on student's final grade thereby encouraging participation.
- The final reflection will become a mandatory assignment in both IDS 4020 and 4030.
- The reflection prompt will be adjusted from paragraph format and each question will be separated and numbered to help students ensure they are responding to and reflecting on all aspects of the discussion prompt.
- Modifications to the career network assignment instructions will be made clearer so students do not miss any portion of the assignment.
- The course steward will drive continuous improvement by providing a sample informational interview, as well as a list of sample questions.

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- Modifications to the rubric will be made to make content and the demonstration of increased understanding the primary focus when grading.
- A sample mock interview will be recorded and provided to the students.
- Instructors will match mock interview partners based on having similar professional goals or experiences, to possible provide students a networking opportunity for the future.