

AC 2020 – 2021 Assessment

Bachelor of Arts – Liberal Arts (220)

College: Arts and Sciences

Prepared by: Francene J Lemoine

Date: June 18, 2021

Approved by: Francene J Lemoine

Date: June 18, 2021

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. 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 fifth 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

AC 2020 – 2021 Assessment

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 Program of Study is designed in collaboration with an advisor and serves as the official document that guides selection of courses.
- (7) 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.
- (8) The resume is a professional document written by the student in their IDS4020 course. It is composed after dialog and assistance from the course instructor and becomes a part of their career portfolio assignment.
- (9) The cover letter is a professional document written by the student in their IDS4020 course. It is composed after dialog and assistance from the course instructor and becomes a part of their career portfolio assignment.
- (10) The discussion boards require reflective, critical thinking and act as prompts for larger assignments in the student's IDS4020/4030 courses. The student is required to view other students' posts and provide their posts for other students to view and evaluate. It requires independent and critical thinking.
- (11) The final reflective essay is a document written by the student at the end of their IDS4030 course. It requires that students reflect on and discuss their capstone and undergraduate experience.
- (12) 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

AC 2020 – 2021 Assessment

COAS. The student will articulate their goals in designing their Program of Study and Degree Completion Plan.

Measure 1.1. (Direct – knowledge):

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

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 AC 2019-20, 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. Based on the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, in AC 2020-2021, student/academic advisor engagement, as demonstrated by number of interactions, was increased from 26 students communicating (face-to-face or virtually) with their academic advisor anywhere from one to nine times per academic year. Based on this positive shift, it was determined that academic advisors would continue to monitor student/advisor interactions or sessions and work more closely with the students as they develop their Degree Completion Plans to outline their completion to degree.

As a result of these changes which were implemented in AC 2020-2021, the target was met with 95% of assessed students successfully completing the Program of Study and Degree Completion Plan to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. Student/academic advisor engagement, as demonstrated by number of interactions, was increased with the 28 students communicating (face-to-face or virtually) with their academic advisor a total of 216 times during the academic year.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was met. Based on the analysis of the AC 2020-2021 assessment results, in AC 2021-2022 academic advisors will work more closely with the students as they develop their Degree Completion Plans to outline their completion to degree and work to encourage greater communication regarding their academic progression/retention needs.

AC 2020 – 2021 Assessment

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 discussion board posts and a Final Reflective Essay in which they synthesize (utilize critical thinking skills) the experiences and lessons learned during their capstone courses and their entire undergraduate education. Students are evaluated on the language, appearance, and content of the compositions.

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce discussion board posts and one hundred percent (100%) of students will produce a Final Reflective Essay that earns a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

Ideal Target: All (100%) students will pass the assessments with a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: Instructor of IDS4020/4030 and Dean

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020, the target was met with 100% of the students successfully completing the Graduation Essay to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. Based on the AC 2019-2020 results, advisors/faculty worked to improve student achievement by using specific due dates to prompt students of the requirement and to assist the tracking of student submissions. Additionally, advisors/faculty conducted a survey to determine which resources students found to be most valuable in the process of their writing.

Additionally, during the Fall 2020 semester, faculty began offering Liberal Arts majors two new courses: IDS4020 (Perspectives/Senior Seminar) and IDS4030 (Career Readiness/Senior Seminar). These courses, which encompass the experiential learning component of the BA in Liberal Arts degree help students transition from student to professional by assisting them with further developing their critical thinking skills. The creation of writing samples in these courses (discussion board postings and the Final Reflective Essay) are being used to assess students' critical thinking skills.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-2021, the target was not met with 2/7 (28%) the students earning a cumulative discussion board postings score of at least 80% and 3/7 (42%) students synthesizing a Final Reflective Essay that scored at least 80%.

AC 2020 – 2021 Assessment

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the target was not met. Based upon the analysis of these AC 2020-2021 results, for AC 2021-2022, the course steward will drive continuous improvement with the following revisions. The overall point value for the discussion board posts will be increased such that it weighs heavier on the students' final grades. Additionally, the instructions for the Final Reflective Essay will be altered and more extensively conveyed to students. The assignment prompt will be adjusted from paragraph format such that 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 demonstrate specific written communication and interpersonal skills.

Measure 3.1. (Direct – knowledge)

Description: Students will demonstrate specific written communication and interpersonal skills in the synthesis of a job application cover letter and resume as well as in a mock interview. Each of these is a required assignment/activity in IDS4030.

Acceptable Target: Ninety percent (90%) of students will produce a job application cover letter and resume that each earns a score of at least seventy-five percent (75%). Ninety percent (90%) of students will conduct a mock job interview that earns a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

Ideal Target: All (100%) students will pass the assessments with a score of at least eighty percent (80%).

Implementation Plan (timeline): Each semester

Key/Responsible Personnel: Instructor of IDS4020/4030 and Dean

Finding: Target not met.

Analysis: In AC 2019-2020, the target was met with 100% of the students successfully completing the Graduation Essay to the maximal expectation level outlined in the attached rubric. Based on the analysis of the AC 2019-2020 results, in AC 2020-2021, advisors/faculty used specific due dates to prompt students of the requirement and to assist the tracking of student submissions and their use of more direct feedback on the effectiveness of communications between students and their advisors. This was done by recording notes on Degree Works to assist in advising process and stressing to students the importance of submission of required assessments. Additionally, with the addition of more advisors in the Academic Advising Center, collection of data and monitoring of the assessments improved.

Faculty also began offering Liberal Arts majors two new courses: IDS4020 (Perspectives/Senior Seminar) and IDS4030 (Career Readiness/Senior Seminar). These

AC 2020 – 2021 Assessment

courses, which encompass the experiential learning component of the BA in Liberal Arts degree 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 are being used to assess students' written communication and interpersonal skills.

As a result of these changes, in AC 2020-2021, the target was met regarding the construction of a job application covers letter with 7/7 (100%) of the students earning a score of at least 75%, was not met regarding the construction of a resume with 6/7 (85%) of the students earning a score of at least 75% and was met regarding the mock job interview with 7/7 (100%) students earning a score of at least 80%.

Decision: In AC 2020-2021, the overall target was not met. Based upon the analysis of these AC 2020-2021 results, for AC 2021-2022, the course steward will drive continuous improvement with the following revisions. For additional instruction on cover letter and resume synthesis, the IDS4020 course steward will create a recorded lecture that will break down the different components of a cover letter and resume as well as discuss tips and common mistakes in their construction. Additionally, all IDS 4020 instructors will reserve 1–2-hour block of office hours during the week the final cover letter/resume assignments are due to ensure their availability for any last minute, student assistance. For additional instruction on job interview preparation, sample mock interview(s) will be recorded and provided to the students to showcase professional appearance and proper verbal and non-verbal communication. It will also include common interview questions or scenarios to illustrate how to best respond/react. In addition, instructors will match mock interview partners who have similar professional goals or experiences to engage students in the process of beginning to develop a networking circle.

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

For AC2019-2020 the academic advisors, IDS4020/4030 instructors, 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 AC2020-2021 were as follows:

- Academic advisors monitored and documented student/advisor interactions or sessions.
- Advisors worked more closely with the students as they develop their Degree Completion Plans to outline their completion to degree.
- Academic advisors used specific due dates to prompt students of the assessment submission requirements and assisted in the tracking of student submissions.
- Faculty began offering to Liberal Arts majors two new courses - IDS4020 (Perspectives/Senior Seminar) and IDS4030 (Career Readiness/Senior Seminar). These courses are designed to help students transition from student to professional by assisting

AC 2020 – 2021 Assessment

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.

- New writing pieces (discussion board posts and final reflective essays) were created in the IDS4020 and IDS4030 courses. These new assignments were used to assess students' critical thinking skills.
- Faculty worked to find ways to improve the assessment process to include those students who matriculate into the program late in their academic careers.

The changes implemented in AC 2020-2021, 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 AC 2021-2022, faculty will implement the following to drive further improvements in student achievement of the BA of Liberal Arts program Student Learning Outcomes:

- Advisors will also work more closely with the students as they develop their Degree Completion Plans to outline their completion to degree and work to encourage greater communication regarding their academic progression/retention needs.
- In IDS4020/4030, the overall point value for discussion board posts will be increased such that it weighs heavier on the students' final course grades.
- The instructions for the Final Reflective Essay will be altered and more extensively conveyed to students. The assignment prompt will be adjusted from paragraph format such that each question will be separated and numbered to help students ensure they are responding to and reflecting on all aspects of the discussion prompt.
- In IDS4020/4030, additional instruction on cover letter and resume synthesis will be provided. All students will be provided with a recorded lecture that breaks down the different components of a cover letter and resume as well as discuss tips and common mistakes in their construction.
- All IDS 4020 instructors will reserve 1–2-hour block of office hours during the week the final cover letter/resume assignments are due to ensure their availability for any last minute, student assistance.
- For mock job interview preparation, sample mock interview(s) will be recorded and provided to the students to showcase professional appearance and proper verbal and non-verbal communication. It will also include common interview questions or scenarios to illustrate how to best respond/react.
- IDS4020/4030 instructors will match mock interview partners who have similar professional goals or experiences to engage students in the process of beginning to develop a networking circle.

AC 2020 – 2021 Assessment

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