Assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes Retreat Report

The campus general education plan was adopted for the 2010-12 *Academic Bulletin* and the academic units did the first planned general education assessment of Student Learning Outcomes (SLO) during the following four years. Upon completion of the first four years of assessment, the General Education/Assessment Committee (GEAC) met on Thursday, July 23, 2015 from 9:00AM-1:00PM. An annual retreat was the suggestion of our assessment consultant, Barbara Walvoord, who we hosted on campus in 2009 and 2015. The goal of our first assessment retreat was to aggregate and analyze campus SLO assessment data collected over the past four years. We planned to identify some common strengths and weaknesses in our assessment of SLO and to recommend to the campus two to three actionable items to work on over the course of the next year. We hope to make this retreat and subsequent report an annual event and report to the Northwest Council on the campus general education assessment efforts.

There were nine members of the GEAC present, including the Associate Executive Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, Cynthia O'Dell; Vesna Kilibarda, Chair of the GEAC and Associate Professor of Mathematics; Doug Swartz, Clinical Assistant Professor of English; Jim Thomas, Senior Lecturer in Business; Latrice Booker, Librarian; Barbara Peat, Professor of Criminal Justice; Gianluca Di Muzio, Associate Professor of Philosophy; Linda Wozniewski, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry; and Bonnie Neff, Professor of Communication.

The task of aggregation and analysis of assessment data, produced by both the departments/schools and NSSE, was delegated to several groups of members of the committee and later shared with everyone at the meeting. The data can be found at http://www.iun.edu/campus-assessment/assessment-results/index.htm. The following are our conclusions and recommendations for action.

Analysis Discussion Points

The following were identified as **strengths** of our students in meeting SLO:

- Students are comfortable asking questions in our classes. (Source: NSSE)
- There is improvement in giving presentations (speeches) throughout the semester. (Source: Units' Assessment)
- Data suggest that we are comparable or better than our peers in most of the general education areas assessed. (Source: NSSE)

The following were identified as **weaknesses** of our students in meeting SLO:

- Our students do not read and write as much as students in our peer institutions. (Source: NSSE)
- There is insufficient evidence of integrating mathematical/quantitative reasoning in natural and social sciences. (Source: Units' Assessment)
- There is insufficient evidence of transfer of learning across disciplines and curriculum. (Source: Units' Assessment)

The following were identified as **strengths** of our assessment process:

- Data suggest that we are comparable to our peers in most of the areas assessed. (Source: NSSE)
- Many units' reports contained plans for action steps to improve the assessment process (Source: Units' Assessment)
- A few units' reports contained plans for pedagogical/curricular changes based on the assessment outcomes. (Source: Units' Assessment)

The following were identified as **weaknesses** of our assessment process:

- There was a limited number of capstone course reports and inconsistency in reporting. (Source: Units' Assessment)
- There were few rubrics/templates used overall and there was no uniformity across departments/schools when assessing the same outcomes. (Source: Units' Assessment)
- There was limited use of authentic and meaningful assessment. (Source: Units' Assessment)

Recommendations Based on Analysis

Recommendations – Improving SLO

Enhance integration of quantitative/mathematical reasoning into the natural and social science courses.

- In order to do so, Principle 2 Breadth of Learning SLO Assessment should be a component of new projects sponsored by CISTL

Create a learning community focused on reading in the disciplines.

- In order to do so, Principle 2 Breadth of Learning SLO Assessment should be a component of new projects sponsored by CISTL and the Writing Across the Curriculum Committee

Create interdisciplinary assignments that will be shared and will connect across curriculum.

- In order to do so, Principle 2 Breadth of Learning SLO Assessment should be a component of new projects sponsored by CISTL

Recommendations – Improving Assessment Processes

Create templates and timetables for reporting critical thinking in capstone courses (and eventually all other SLO) - Committee's responsibility 2016 and beyond

- Example: Rubric for Critical Thinking (developed by the GEAC) attached
- Example: Guidelines for Assessment provided to deans/chairs attached

Further clarify the role of department chairs/program directors in assessment and subsequent curricular enhancement

- Refer to *Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education* and arrange meetings about assessment of SLO with EVCAA, deans, directors, and chairs (recommendation from B. Walvoord)

Compare our processes with other regional IU campuses to look for best practices- Committee's responsibility for 2016

Administer ETS Proficiency Profile to seniors in capstone courses in Spring 2016 – additional relevant data with which to recommend improvements (as they were tested as freshman four years ago)

Report to EVCAA and NW Council annually - Committee's responsibility

Finally, a recent report commissioned by the AAC&U (*Recent Trends in General Education Design, Learning Outcomes, and Teaching Approaches*, released 1-21-16) indicates our general education reflects the larger national approach to general education. Eighty-seven percent of AAC&U master's institutions have a common set of intended learning outcomes for all undergraduates as do we. Our general education contains 9/11 of the specific skills and 8/11 of the knowledge areas discussed in the report. Additionally, our general education program can be described as a distribution model with other features, mirroring 68% of the AAC&U institutions participating in the survey. Forty-six percent include upper-level general education requirements similar to our program and 66% use a capstone experience in either the major or general education, similar to our program. Finally, 68% of AAC&U institutions surveyed indicate that they assess student achievement of learning outcomes. So, while our general education assessment efforts are relatively new and the processes continue to need refinement and professional development support, we are well-positioned to continue our improvement journey related to general education assessment.

Breadth of Learning SLO analysis General Education Retreat

Course	Design	Type	Findings	Action Steps
Introductory Psychology	Pre and Post-test	Multiple choice	Showed change in 1 of the 3 LOs	Adopt comprehensive final and adjust measurement time
Interpersonal Communication	Post	Multiple choice	Outcome 1 positive results, not for other 2	Pedagogy changes; hired director of 100-level courses; faculty development
American History	Post	Open-ended questions	Less than positive outcomes	Plan new pedagogical experiences for H105/H106
Introductory Philosophy	Post	Open-ended questions	Positive outcomes	Design timeline assignments for all P100
Music Appreciation		Exam questions throughout	Positive outcomes	None planned
Introduction to Spanish		Assignments during course of class	Positive outcomes	Change weight of assignment to increase number who complete, standardize attempts
Introduction to Computing		Assignment during course of class on using Excel	Positive outcome	None planned
Introduction to Earth Science	Post	Not clear when assigned – but during class	Generally positive outcomes	Suggested change in how scientific method is taught
Microorganisms in Nature and Disease	Post	Multiple choice on lab final	Positive outcome	None planned
NSSE on Principle 2	No effect sizes larger than small and only a few of them (7/18) – so essentially we look like our peers on these measures			

Not a lot of pre-tests; generally positive findings; no follow-up on whether they did what they said they would do (how do we do that?); perhaps CISTL could mine action steps for programming to help faculty?

Critical Thinking Rubric dev. by the General Education Committee 2014

Highly proficient work: student always or nearly always

- raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely
- gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively
- comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards
- thinks open-mindedly about alternative systems of thought or beliefs, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems

Proficient work: student consistently

- raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely
- gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively
- comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards
- thinks open-mindedly about alternative systems of thought or beliefs, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems

Partially proficient work: student only occasionally

- raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely
- gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively
- comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards
- thinks open-mindedly about alternative systems of thought or beliefs, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems

Not proficient work: student almost never

- raises vital questions and problems, formulating them clearly and precisely
- gathers and assesses relevant information, using abstract ideas to interpret it effectively
- comes to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions, testing them against relevant criteria and standards
- thinks open-mindedly about alternative systems of thought or beliefs, recognizing and assessing, as need be, their assumptions, implications, and practical consequences; and
- communicates effectively with others in figuring out solutions to complex problems

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING ASSESSMENT OFSTUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR GENERAL EDUCATION CLASSES

IU Northwest Rev. 4/2012

A good place to start in developing a plan for assessing student learning outcomes for general education classes is to first review the outcomes depicted for the principle under which the course qualifies. For example, Scientific Reasoning has the following two required outcomes:

> Demonstrate the ability and explain how scientific theories are formulated, tested, and validated
>
> Demonstrate the ability to integrate and apply scientific methods which include defining parameters of problem, seeking relevant information, subjecting proposed solutions to rigorous testing and drawing conclusions based on the process

The next step is to determine the method for assessing student learning outcomes such as test questions, writing assignment, oral presentation, portfolio, etc. If test questions are to be used then the program must describe the type of test question such as objective or subjective. If using objective test questions, then the actual questions must be included in the description of the assessment strategy. In using short answer or essay test questions, writing assignments, presentation or portfolios, a description of the evaluation method must be provided. For example, a rubric could be used in any of these methods. If the plan is to use a rubric for evaluation of student performance then the instrument must be provided with the narrative description of the assessment plan.

The third step is to correlate the assessment method(s) to the general education learning outcome or separate parts of the outcome. For example, the first outcome listed above actually seeks outcomes in three subareas including how scientific theories are (1) formulated, (2) tested, and (3) validated. All parts of an outcome must be addressed in assessment.

The following chart summarizes what steps should be completed in developing strategies for assessing general education learning outcomes and then completing your assessment:

Task
1. Restate the General Education Learning Outcomes relevant to the course
2. State the assessment method to be used - Objective Test Questions and/or Subjective Assessment Strategy (i.e., short answer or essay test questions, writing/research assignment, oral presentation, lab demonstration, portfolio, etc.) with rubric attached that will be used for performance evaluation
3. Note that all parts of each general education student learning outcome is assessed

	using one or more of the above strategies
4.	Collect and analyze Data
5.	Summarize your findings in a report including all the information from the previous steps and indicating your next steps in closing the loop of assessment. For example, will your curriculum be revised to emphasize different areas, will your assessment be redesigned to better represent the learning that has occurred, etc.

Classification System for General Education Assessment Results

Rev. 9/2014

No matter the type of assessment measure you choose to use, please characterize the students in your sample into the following categories on each of the outcomes listed for your General Education Principle. This will allow us to report our assessment results using a common language as required by our accrediting body.

Highly proficient
Proficient
Partially proficient
Not proficient

Examples of Rubrics that might be of assistance:

AAC&U Value Rubrics - https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics
How to create Rubrics - http://assessment.uconn.edu/docs/How_to_Create_Rubrics.pdf