**General Education Assessment Committee Report**

**Spring 2020**

**Executive Summary**

March 2020 marked the onset of a sudden shift to 100% online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite the disruption to the traditional trajectory of the semester, and in accordance with its established assessment schedule, the General Education Assessment Committee (GEAC) collected work products to assess students’ competence regarding SLO 6, “Analyze the role of values, ethics, diversity and multiple perspectives in local and global society.” This SLO is an outcome of courses in two categories: (1) Understanding the Self and Others (Category B) and (2) Understanding and Creating Ideas (Category D). Various factors precipitated by the pandemic resulted in a smaller sample size than planned. Indeed, only 4% of the requested data was submitted. Sample size notwithstanding, we did not reach the benchmark set by GEAC.

GEAC also assessed SLO 8, “Explore concepts, ideas, and methods from a variety of disciplines,” by analyzing data from the transcripts of all Spring 2020 graduates. While initial analysis of SLO 8 seems promising, the committee discovered that in the original General Education plans for the 2018 program, no benchmark had been established for this SLO.

The report concludes with recommendations to hone our communication channels and our processes to drive improvements to the General Education curriculum so that our students achieve the desired outcomes.

**Student Learning Outcome 6**

At the start of Spring 2020, 4305 students were enrolled in Category B courses and 2218 were enrolled in Category D for a total of 6523. (A list of the 56 courses within Categories B and D that were offered in Spring 2020 can be found in Appendix A.) Based on past GEAC efforts that have taken into consideration the feasibility of assessment as well as collecting a statistically significant sample, we anticipated collecting approximately 980 student work products that semester.

At the beginning of the spring 2020 semester, faculty who were scheduled to teach a category B or D course were contacted to let them know they would be asked to submit student work products for the purposes of general education assessment. A copy of the rubric for SLO 6 was included in the message, and faculty were asked to send one assignment for each student, on which the students demonstrated the competencies indicated in the SLO.

In early March, faculty were notified which students from their course had been selected for the sample. When choosing the sample size, GEAC is concerned not only with a number that will provide statistical significance, but also with a manageable process, and a reasonable number of artifacts for volunteer raters to rate. In years past, the number of volunteer raters was consistently under 30, and using that number as a possibility, we included 15% of the 6000+ students in the sample, which would result in about 978 student work products, or just over 30 per rater, if we had 30 volunteers.  The 15% of students were chosen randomly using a random number generator and a numbered list of students in each category.

Due to the pandemic and abrupt change in course methodology, several factors affected the submission of student work products:

(1) Students dropped the class.

(2) Students did not complete the assignment that assessed the SLO.

(3) Assignments changed significantly due to altered course methodology after the switch to all virtual learning.

(4) Certain electronic submissions were not usable (i.e. contained entire discussion boards, lacked student names) due to the nature of D2L and the tools available during the pandemic.

These factors in turn affected GEAC’s data collection process to the extent that only 275 student work products—that is, 31% of the expected sample--were submitted. These 275 student work products represent 4% of the 6000 students enrolled in category B and D courses in spring 2020.

**Rating Procedures**

In fall 2020, we recruited 38 volunteer raters, and provided three training/norming sessions. During the training sessions, members of GEAC introduced the rubric for SLO #6 to the volunteers and guided them through two sample student work products using the rubric. Further, attendees discussed the different performance levels to ensure that the rubric was being applied consistently. Subsequently, each volunteer faculty rater was assigned and emailed about 10 student work products. No raters were given their own students’ work. Raters were asked to rate the student work products against the SLO #6 rubric and to determine a single, holistic performance level, yet this rating need not be a whole number. Raters also had the option of rating a student work product as X (insufficient information) or Z (student work product not appropriate for the SLO)[[1]](#footnote-1). In addition, 25% of the artifacts were double-rated to verify inter-rater agreement. All ratings were submitted by the end of November 2020.

**Data Analysis & Results**

An analysis of student work data from SLO 6 reveals ratings that ranged from X (could not be assessed) to four, in increments of .5. (See the rubric in Appendix Two for specific information on each performance level).

*Table One* demonstrates the evaluation frequency for SLO #6 in Category B courses.

*Table One: Category B Artifact Ratings*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rating | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative Frequency | Cumulative Percentage |
| 4.0 | 4 | 3.39% | 4 | 3.39% |
| 3.5 | 1 | 0.85% | 5 | 4.24% |
| 3.0 | 26 | 22.03% | 31 | 26.27% |
| 2.5 | 15 | 12.71% | 46 | 38.98% |
| 2.0 | 29 | 24.58% | 75 | 63.56% |
| 1.5 | 11 | 9.32% | 86 | 72.88% |
| 1.0 | 32 | 27.12% | 118 | 100.00% |
| 0.5 | 0 | 0.00% | 118 | 100.00% |
| Total | **118** | **100.00%** |  |  |
| There were 9 ratings of Z and 6 ratings of X. | | |  |  |

For the 133 student work products collected and analyzed in Category B courses (excluding the 15 items rated as X or Z), the average rating was 2.04661.

*Table Two* displays the inter-rater variance of SLO 6 for Category B courses. The average variance is .64, which does not include the 7 outliers, that is, the case in which one rater assigned a numerical rating and the other rated the student work product as an X or a Z).

*Table Two: Category B Artifact Inter-Rater Reliability*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variance Between Ratings | Number of Occurrences | Frequency Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
| 3 | 0 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| 2.5 | 0 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| 2 | 3 | 7.9% | 100.0% |
| 1.5 | 2 | 5.3% | 92.1% |
| 1 | 10 | 26.3% | 86.8% |
| 0.5 | 11 | 28.9% | 60.5% |
| 0 | 12 | 31.6% | 31.6% |
| Total | 38 | 100.0% |  |
| Ratability inconsistencies\* | 7 |  |  |

\* One rater assigned a rating and the other rated the SWP as an X or a Z.

*Table Three* demonstrates the evaluation frequency for SLO #6 in Category D courses. For the 137 student work products that were collected and analyzed, the average rating was 2.004274, excluding the 15 ratings of Z.

*Table Three: Category D Artifact Ratings*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rating | Frequency | Percentage | Cumulative Frequency | Cumulative Percentage |
| 4.0 | 6 | 4.92% | 6 | 4.92% |
| 3.5 | 5 | 4.10% | 11 | 9.02% |
| 3.0 | 16 | 13.11% | 27 | 22.13% |
| 2.5 | 17 | 13.93% | 44 | 36.07% |
| 2.0 | 36 | 29.51% | 80 | 65.57% |
| 1.5 | 12 | 9.84% | 92 | 75.41% |
| 1.0 | 24 | 19.67% | 116 | 95.08% |
| 0.5 | 6 | 4.92% | 122 | 100.00% |
| Total | **122** | **100.00%** |  |  |
| There were 15 ratings of Z. | |  |  |  |

*Table Four* shows the inter-rater reliability of Category D courses. The average variance of .67 excludes the eight outliers where one rater assigned a rating and the other rated the student work product as an X or a Z.

*Table Four: Category D Artifact Inter-Rater Reliability*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Variance Between Ratings | Number of Occurrences | Frequency Percentage | Cumulative Percentage |
| 3 | 0 | 0.0% | 100.0% |
| 2.5 | 1 | 2.8% | 100.0% |
| 2 | 1 | 2.8% | 97.2% |
| 1.5 | 5 | 13.9% | 94.4% |
| 1 | 6 | 16.7% | 80.6% |
| 0.5 | 12 | 33.3% | 63.9% |
| 0 | 11 | 30.6% | 30.6% |
| Total | 36 | 100.0% |  |
| Ratability inconsistencies\* | 8 |  |  |

\* One rater assigned a rating and the other rated the SWP as an X or a Z.

**Analysis of Category B and D Ratings**: The benchmark set by GEAC is a rating of at least 2 for all students. Only 63.56% of the students in the Category B courses achieved a 2 or higher. Results from the Category D courses were slightly higher at 65.57%, yet still well below the goal of 100%. As already mentioned, the small sample size (less than 4%) renders decision-making based on this data somewhat problematic. The results, nevertheless, are somewhat troubling.

Another data point that we can examine is the difference in student scores based on the number of category B or D courses the student has taken. Given that each student is required to take three courses in each category, we would expect their performance rating to increase as the number of courses they have taken increases; in other words, a student who is in their third Category B course would have more experience with the SLOs associated with that Category and should be able to do work that is rated higher than a student who has only completed one course in that Category. Our results, however, are inconsistent.

*Table Five* and *Table Six* show the average rating on the artifacts for SLO 6B & 6D, respectively. On average, students who have taken more than one Category B course scored a higher rating than students who have only taken one Category B course. Category B does not have a strong linear positive correlation. In addition, students who have taken more than one Category D course scored a lower rating compared to students who have taken only one Category D course. Category D also lacks a strong linear positive correlation.

*Table Five*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| # of 6B courses taken | Average rating |
| 1 | 1.97 |
| 2 | 2.41 |
| 3 | 1.98 |
| >3 | 2.25 |

*Table Six*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| # of 6D Courses Taken | Average Rating |
| 1 | 2.14 |
| 2 | 1.92 |
| 3 | 2.04 |

As recommended in the last GEAC report, we intended to analyze ratings at the prefix level upon assessing this SLO What was the rating of student work in the BIO classes, for example, as compared to the rating of student work in the ENG classes? Although we have that data, the disparity of the sample size among the prefixes problematizes any analysis at the microlevel; while some prefixes had only one or two student work products, others had many times that, making comparisons tentative. We hope to have a better, more evenly distributed sample the next time this SLO is assessed.

**Student Learning Outcome 8**

In addition to SLO 6, in Spring 2020 GEAC also evaluated SLO 8, which posits the goal of significant breadth of study, consistent with our liberal arts mission. Our aim with this SLO is to measure the number of different academic disciplines to which graduates are exposed. Because course prefixes align sufficiently well with academic disciplines, we used diversity of prefixes as a relative gauge. The larger the variety of prefixes, the greater breadth of study. The mean number of different course prefixes on the transcripts of graduating seniors in Spring 2020 for the 1,005 students was 14.2 (SD = 4.6, 95% CI [13.9, 14.5]).

The rubric for assessing SLO 8 consists of four performance levels. *Table Seven* shows the number of course prefixes that were used to indicate each of the levels of performance. The figure also shows the number of students who fell in each level and the percentage out of the total.

*Table Seven: Number & percentage of students falling in each performance level of SLO 08.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Performance  Level | Number of  Prefixes | Number of  Students | Percentage  of Total |
|  | 0 to 2 | 14 | 1.4 |
| 1 | 3 to 4 | 25 | 2.5 |
| 2 | 5 to 7 | 67 | 6.7 |
| 3 | 8 to 10 | 102 | 10.1 |
| 4 | 11 and up | 797 | 79.3 |
| Total |  | 1005 | 100.0 |

The performance levels for SLO #8 across the four colleges are as follows.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| College | Size | Mean and (SD) | 95% CI |
|  |  |  |  |
| COB | 214 | 16.2 (4.3) | [15.6, 16.8] |
| COE | 185 | 14.5 (3.9) | [14.0, 15.1] |
| LAS | 391 | 13.4 (4.9) | [12.9, 13.9] |
| VPA | 215 | 13.3 (4.3) | [12.7, 13.9] |
| Total | 1005 | 14.2 (4.6) | [13.9, 14.5] |

Notice that the lower limit of the confidence interval for COB is higher than the upper limit of all the other confidence intervals. Also, the lower limit of the confidence interval for COE is higher than the upper limit for LAS and VPA. That, plus the distributions (shown below), suggests that COB performed better than all the other colleges, and COE performed better than LAS and VPA.

Importantly, however, although the gaps between the confidence intervals show statistically significant evidence for those differences, that statistical significance is just as much due to the large sample sizes as to the size of the differences. The statistical significance of the evidence suggests that one can confidently predict that the differences would occur again under the same circumstances. However, the absolute size of the differences may or may not be large enough to be of any practical importance. The importance of the differences must be determined by practical considerations that are beyond the statistical analysis. The analysis allows for two conclusions: Students are taking a breadth of classes across all four colleges in our gen ed program, and some colleges are performing slightly better than others on this metric.

*Table Eight:* Distribution of percentages of students at each level of SLO #8 for the four colleges. (Continued on page 7.)

**Recommendations to Refine our Assessment Practices**

**Evaluation:**  The rubric for SLO 6 is strongly focused on ethics, which is mentioned five times in the SLO definition and addressed in two of the four areas of evaluation on the rubric. Meanwhile, the description of the categories of courses in this area of General Education (B and D) reference reflection on societal issues in a broader sense.  Making the rubric less constraining by expanding the evaluation criteria would make it applicable to a wider range of student work products. For example, wording such as “issues related to human interactions” would be more comprehensive than “ethical issues” while still addressing the core concept of this SLO to “analyze the role of values, ethics, diversity and multiple perspectives in local and global society.” Individual assessments and assignments in General Education courses are not likely to address all the areas of this SLO, making the current rubric a challenge to apply. GEAC recommends that the General Education Committee review SLO 6, and upon its revision, that GEAC update the associated rubric.

**Communication and feedback:**  It would be helpful to communicate to all faculty (not just those who are teaching in the categories being evaluated) prior to the start of each semester not only the SLOs, but also the corresponding General Education categories, that will be evaluated for the upcoming semester, or for the academic year. This will serve as a recurring reminder of the process and perhaps promote department-level and even college-level discussions of this requirement of General Education courses. It will also provide ample time for questions about the process and appropriate assessments while the faculty who will need to submit artifacts are still preparing their syllabi.

Most faculty at the university are not directly involved in the oversight or assessment process of the General Education program, which may contribute to uncertainty and/or apprehension when they are asked to submit artifacts to GEAC for evaluation. The request for student work products includes the rubric but no information on how it will be applied or expected performance levels.  It also does not mention outcomes of the GEAC evaluation process, which was a question posed by a faculty rater in a norming session this semester.  We should consider more frequent informational and Q/A sessions on General Education and GEAC processes and expectations in venues such as Assessment Day, CET, ChairNet, college assessment and chair meetings, or other settings. We should encourage department chairs to include discussions about their General Education courses and the alignment of these courses with program-level assessment and establish a chain of communication whereby faculty and department chairs can address questions and concerns about General Education courses and assessment.

Faculty volunteer raters are a good source of feedback on the assessment process, which could be collected through an anonymous post-rating survey.  Data collected from raters on their experiences applying the rubric and overall reaction to the process would provide GEAC useful information to incorporate in the evaluation process of SLOs going forward.

**Closing the loop:**  GEAC and GEC should work together to establish a protocol for providing course- and/or prefix-level feedback to departments after each semester that their courses are evaluated. The goal of the feedback would be to provide an opportunity for more department-level discussion of their General Education courses and assessments with guidance from the GEC and GEAC. This serves to promote a systematic process of internal (department) evaluation of General Education courses for continuous improvement.

**Timing:**  There is a very short turnaround time between collecting the ratings and responding to them in the final GEAC report. Consideration should be given to adjusting the schedule to allow time for GEAC to discuss the data before preparing the report.  There has been some discussion of having individual faculty rate their own student artifacts, at least as a pilot project. If this process were put into place, faculty could be asked to submit their ratings much earlier than the current rating practice (perhaps even at the end of the semester being evaluated), and GEAC would thus have more time to analyze and discuss the results.

**Appendix A: Category B and D Courses Taught in Spring 2020**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Category B** | **Category D** |
| ANT 10 CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY | ARH 24 ART HISTORY A |
| ANT 101 NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN | ARH 25 ART HISTORY B |
| CHI 102 ELEMENTARY CHINESE II | ARH 124 ART HISTORY A |
| CHM/ENV 35 POWERING OUR FUTURE | ARH 125 ART HISTORY B |
| COM 212 INTRODUCTION TO MASS COMMUNICATION | ARH 126 ART HISTORY C |
| COM 261 INTRO TO HEALTH COMMUNICATION | ARU 236 THE ARTS AND PRE-K 4 EDUCATION |
| EDU 100 PERSPECTIVES ON AMERICAN EDUCATION | CDE 10 DIGITAL FOUNDATIONS |
| EDU 150 MEETING THE INSTRUCTIONAL NEEDS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS | COM 216 PERFORMANCE OF LITERATURE |
| ENG 105 EXPERIENCES IN AMERICAN LITERATURE | EDU 120 HIP HOP AND MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION |
| ENG 119 AMERICAN GENRE FILM | ENG 141 LITERATURE AND FILM |
| ENG 229 LITERATURE AND PSYCHOLOGY | ENG 144 COMICS STUDIES |
| FRE 101 ELEMENTARY FRENCH I | ENG 180 LITERATURE AND ROCK AND ROLL |
| FRE 102 ELEMENTARY FRENCH II | FAR 14 DRAWING FOR NON-ART MAJORS |
| GEG 20 ELEMENTS OF CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY | FAR 61 INTRO TO DARKROOM PHOTO FOR NON-MAJORS |
| GEG 101 WORLD REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY | GER 260 GERMAN CULTURE THROUGH FILM IN ENGLISH |
| GEG 140 THE GEOGRAPHY OF EUROPE | HIS 14 HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION A |
| GEG 223 TRANSPORTATION GEOGRAPHY | HIS 15 HISTORY OF CIVILIZATION B |
| GEG 225 SPACES OF GLOBALIZATION | HIS 33 CONSPIRACIES OF MODERN AMERICAN HISTORY |
| GER 101 ELEMENTARY GERMAN I | HIS 34 FAMILIES AND PERSONAL LIVES IN AMERICAN HISTORY |
| GER 102 ELEMENTARY GERMAN II | HUM/ARC/WGS 211 WOMEN IN THE ARTS |
| HEA 102 INTRO TO HEALTH AND WELLNESS | LLT 321 TECHNOLOGIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY EDUCATOR |
| HIS 25 US FORMATIVE YEARS | MUS 10 INTRODUCTION TO MUSIC |
| HIS 26 EMERGENCE OF MODERN AMERICA | MUS 20 BASIC CONCEPTS AND SKILLS |
| PHI 40 INTRO TO ETHICS | MUS 106 HISTORY OF ROCK AND ROLL |
| PHI 113 ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY | MUS 113 INTRO TO FILM MUSIC |
| POL 10 INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN POLITICS | MUS 225 JAZZ: ITS HISTORY AND INFLUENCE |
| POL 20 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS | MUS 228 INTRO TO FILM MUSIC |
| POL 30 INTRO TO COMPARATIVE POLITICS | MUS 312 MUSIC FROM 1750 TO THE PRESENT |
| SOC 10 INTRO TO SOCIOLOGY | PAG 10 INTRO TO PA GERMAN STUDIES |
| SOC 235 SOCIOLOGY OF GENDER | PHI 30 INTRO TO PHILOSOPHY |
| SPA 101 ELEMENTARY SPANISH I | POL 211 PUBLIC OPINION AND PROPAGANDA |
| SPA 102 ELEMENTARY SPANISH II | SOC 222 RURAL POVERTY |
| SPT 205 SPORT BEHAVIOR | SOC 224 IMMIGRATION AND ASSIMILATION |
| SPU 201 COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT OF DIVERSE LEARNERS | SOC 230 URBAN SOCIOLOGY |
| SWK 100 INTRO TO SOCIAL WORK | SOC 246 GLOBALIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT |
| SWK 130 POVERTY & SOCIAL WELFARE |

**APPENDIX B: Approved GEAC Rubric to Assess SLO 6**

**Definition:** An important principle or standard at the core of behavior and considered important or desirable that drives our ethical decisions about right and wrong human conduct. It requires students to be able to assess their own ethical values and the social context of problems, recognize ethical issues in a variety of settings, think about how different ethical perspectives might be applied to ethical dilemmas, and consider the ramifications of alternative actions in both the local and global communities.

**This SLO is met in General Education Category B – Understanding Self and Others** - Courses in this category explore self-reflection and human interaction as they relate to understanding our world and ourselves. Specifically, they focus on the influence of culture and the role of the individual on the understanding of the development, achievements, behavior, organization, or distribution of humanity. And, **D – Understanding and Creating Ideas** – Courses in this category capture the process of imagination in the creation of aesthetic objects, environments, or experiences influencing and affecting one or more of the senses, emotions, and intellect. They also apply universal ideas through focusing on meanings of events and their impact on society, and exploring issues, artifacts and events before accepting or formulating a position or conclusion.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Performance Levels** | | | |
|  | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **Student output and quality of work** | * Recognizes ethical issues in complex situations, explains the relationship among the issues, and analyzes their impact upon the situations * Analyzes the complexity of elements important to members of other microcultures and/or macrocultures and evaluates their impact * Accurately and deeply applies diverse perspectives to ethical questions, within the context of multiple and even conflicting positions (e.g. cultural, ethical, international, etc.) * Considers multiple perspectives to develop AND implement sophisticated, appropriate, and workable solutions to address local and global issues | * Recognizes ethical issues in complex situations and explains the relationship among the issues * Analyzes the complexity of elements important to members of other microcultures and/or macrocultures * Superficially applies diverse perspectives to ethical questions, within the context of multiple and even conflicting positions (e.g. cultural, ethical, international, etc.) * Considers multiple perspectives to develop OR implement sophisticated, appropriate, and workable solutions to address local and global issues | * Recognizes ethical issues in complex situations * Describes elements important to members of other microcultures and/or macrocultures * Applies a singular perspective to ethical questions * Considers a singular perspective to develop AND implement solutions to address local and global issues | * Identifies ethical issues in basic situations * Identifies elements important to members of other microcultures and/or macrocultures * Identifies a singular perspective to ethical questions * Considers a singular perspective to develop OR implement solutions to address local and/or global issues |

**APPENDIX C: Approved GEAC Rubric to Assess SLO 8**

Definition:Breadth of study is exposure to ideas from a variety of disciplines as defined by the course prefix. Through a transcript audit of graduating seniors, the number of different prefixes taken in the general education program is determined.

**This SLO is met by completing the General Education Program.**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Performance Levels** | | | |
| **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **Student output and quality of work** | * 11 or more different prefixes counted among courses taken for general education | * 8-10 different prefixes counted among courses taken for general education | * 5-7 different prefixes counted among courses taken for general education | * 3-4 different prefixes counted among courses taken for general education |

1. Raters were given the option of 0 for student work products that were not appropriate for the SLO. In this document, we changed zero (0) to Z to avoid numerical calculation. Henceforth, similar use of Z will be the norm for general education assessment. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)