

Loop Closed?

Reflection on the GE PLO Assessments Conducted in 2013 and 2014

NORCO COLLEGE

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GE Assessment 2013 - 2014 Self-Development and Global Awareness (taken from the Norco College General Education Assessment Report: 2013-2014)

For the fall 2013 GE assessment project, the Norco Assessment Committee (NAC) recruited faculty from five large-enrollment courses in which at least one course SLO mapped clearly to at least a portion of the GE outcome involving self-development and global awareness. Three of the five classes (English 1B, Sociology 1, and Psychology 9) had explicit diversity outcomes among the course SLOs; two of the five (Health Science 1 and Guidance 48) had explicit self-development outcomes among the course SLOs. The three courses chosen to assess diversity are already GE courses that enroll hundreds of students. The two courses chosen to assess self-development are not, as yet, part of the GE program, but they are frequently taken by students, usually as part of the section VII “Additional Degree Requirements”

The scores on the diversity sub-outcome and the self-development sub-outcome correlated, for the most part, with number of units of GE the student had completed, thereby providing some evidence that the program as a whole contributes to student achievement of this outcome. An interesting feature of these data in the diversity category is that students who completed more than 24 units in the GE program did less well (though not to a statistically significant extent) than students who had completed 12-24 units. Similarly, the great majority of students (85%) said in their survey responses that the course had helped them achieve the GE SLO; 78% said that their other coursework at the college had also contributed. (A somewhat odd feature of the student response data is that significantly more students believe they had achieved the course SLO but NOT the GE SLO by virtue of their enrollment in the class.) Of the more than 1200 students surveyed, 36% were very confident their other coursework helped them achieve the GE SLO and another 42% were somewhat confident. These are good—but not entirely reassuring—numbers, suggesting perhaps the need for some modification of the GE program itself to ensure that all students take a course more explicitly labeled “global awareness” (and perhaps “self-development”).

GE Assessment 2014 -2015 – Information Competency and Technology Literacy

For the second round of GE assessment, the NAC adhered to the identified rotation schedule (Rotation Plan for Outcomes Assessment at Norco College) and undertook an assessment of the Program Level Outcome identified as Information Competency and Technology Literacy. It was determined that the assessment would focus on the specific skill of being able to “locate relevant information, judge the reliability of sources and

evaluate evidence contained in those sources to construct arguments, make decisions, and solve problems” (RCCD General Education Program Student Learning Outcomes).

In order to identify which sections would participate in the GE assessment, the Assessment Coordinator and the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness utilized an existing curriculum mapping tool. This tool was the result of a special project in which a faculty member was tasked with aligning the Student Learning Outcomes from each course in the GE program to the previous General Education PLOs (six outcomes). These six GE outcomes were revised in 2013 as the result of a district wide task force and were reduced to the four current GE PLOs. It was determined as part of this assessment process, that at some point in the near future another mapping project would need to take place to distinctly align the current GE SLOs to the current GE PLOs. For the sake of the GE assessment for the fall 2014, a simple alignment of the previous GE PLOs to the new GE PLOs was made, and the resulting SLO alignment was used to identify which courses would be invited to participate in the GE assessment. The instructors of the following course sections were invited to participate:

- Anatomy 2A
- Biology 11
- CIS 1A
- English 1A
- Philosophy 11
- Physics 10
- Sociology 20
- Communications 1

An initial meeting was held to discuss the project on 10/16/14 and only the instructors from English 1A and Philosophy 11 were in attendance. Some of the other instructors had informed the Assessment Coordinator that students were not asked to “locate relevant information, judge the reliability of sources and evaluate evidence contained in those sources to construct arguments, make decisions, and solve problems” in the identified sections. Other instructors did not respond to the request for them to participate in the assessment process so it is unclear as to whether there is an alignment between their identified SLOs and this specific PLO.

A process for conducting the assessment was identified and is as follows:

Process for Assessment

- An email will be sent to each faculty involved in the assessment that links to a data entry screen in TracDat. The screen will display every student enrolled in each section of the courses being assessed. The email will be sent to the Instructor Of Record (IOR) shortly after this training.
- Each IOR involved in the assessment will identify an assignment from their section that most closely ties to the *identified specific skills being assessed*, namely,

Students will be able to locate relevant information, judge the reliability of sources and evaluate evidence contained in those sources to construct arguments, make decisions, and solve problems.

- A short statement (rationale) indicating how the assignment corresponds to the identified GE PLO skill will be provided to NAC – this will be used as part of the introduction section of the report that will be generated after the data is collected
- Once the IORs have graded the identified assignment they will then identify in the TracDat data entry screen how well each student did in the assignment with regard to the **identified specific skills being assessed**, and will rate each student using the following 1-4 rating scale.
 - 1= Little or no evidence of competency was demonstrated in achieving the identified GE PLO skill
 - 2= Limited evidence of competency was demonstrated in achieving the identified GE PLO skill
 - 3= Adequate evidence of competency was demonstrated in achieving the identified GE PLO skill
 - 4= Strong evidence of competency was demonstrated in achieving the identified GE PLO skill
- Data entry to TracDat should be completed no later than the 2nd week of the spring semester 2015.

Results will be generated and disseminated to all faculty involved in the assessment, and NAC members, for analysis and input prior to a report being generated.

Results

The data for the GE assessment project in information competency and technology literacy (ICTL) was comprised of 270 students who were enrolled in English 1A & Philosophy 11. As can be seen in the tables below, the sample approximated the demographic distribution of the college as a whole in ethnicity, age, and gender. Based on this, the sample can be assumed to be representative of the college on the basis of these factors.

Age

	Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
19 or less	97	42.5	42.5
20-24	102	44.7	87.3
25-29	14	6.1	93.4
30-34	6	2.6	96.1
35-39	4	1.8	97.8
40-49	4	1.8	99.6
50+	1	.4	100.0
Subtotal	228	100.0	

	Missing	42		
Total		270		

Ethnicity				
		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Asian	22	9.6	9.6
	African American	12	5.3	14.9
	Hispanic	132	57.9	72.8
	Pacific Islander	2	.9	73.7
	White	54	23.7	97.4
	Two or more races	4	1.8	99.1
	Unreported/Unknown	2	.9	100.0
	Subtotal	228	100.0	
	Missing	42		
Total		270		

Gender				
		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Female	119	52.2	52.2
	Male	108	47.4	99.6
	Unknown/non-respondent	1	.4	100.0
	Subtotal	228	100.0	
	Missing	42		
Total		270		

The analysis used to determine if learning demonstrated significant increases based on number of GE units successfully completed was analysis of variance (ANOVA). Students were placed in one of three groups (Group 1: below 12 GE units, Group 2: 12-24 GE units,

Group 3: Above 24 GE units) and means for these groups were calculated as indicated below.

ICTL Mean Scores by GE Units Completed

Units GE Completed	N	Mean
<i>Below 12 GE units</i>	58	2.88
<i>12-24 GE units</i>	45	2.89
<i>Above 24 GE units</i>	122	2.86
Total	225	2.87

As may be intuited by viewing the data, no significant differences were observed between any of the groups. This indicates that mastery of ICTL was not evident as students completed more GE units in this study. One explanation for this is the large number of students in the study who were in ENG-1A (n=160) which may have affected the lack of variance in this GE outcome. Since over 70% of the sample were in a class that requires certain minimum writing standards in order to enroll in the class, this could have a homogenizing effect on the sample. To investigate whether this was the case, a subanalysis of PHI-11 students was conducted using ANOVA. Although their overall scores were somewhat lower, there still were no differences observed between groups. This subanalysis continued to support the assertion made for the entire sample that mastery of ICTL was not observed as the number of completed GE units increased.

ICTL Subanalysis for PHI-11

Units GE Completed	N	Mean
<i>Below 12 GE units</i>	13	2.62
<i>12-24 GE units</i>	9	2.00
<i>Above 24 GE units</i>	32	2.50
Total	54	2.44

Separate debriefing meetings were held with faculty from disciplines that participated in the 2013- 2014 and 2014 - 2015 GE PLO assessments. The first meeting was with the faculty that participated in the most recent assessment in fall 2014. The group was comprised of one full time faculty member from English, who was also responsible for coordinating the assessment for all participating English sections, three part time English faculty instructors, and one part time Philosophy instructor, the Dean of Institutional Effectiveness, and the Assessment Coordinator for the college. The data was shared with the group and the following discussion topics emerged:

1. Is it time to realign the GE SLOs to the current GE PLOs? It seems that more than just two courses in a given semester should provide an opportunity for students to engage in the identified PLO skill. Should it all be left to English 1A and Philosophy to really get to try this component of Information Competency and Technology Literacy? Are we certain that no matter the combination of courses a student takes at any time in there GE courses, are they being exposed to each of the PLOs, or do we rely on them to take only certain classes to get this opportunity?
2. What other courses in the English sequence could provide an opportunity to introduce students to these concepts? Should the discipline take a look at how individual sections might be able to scaffold some of this behavior into the expected outcomes for the course?
3. Do instructors in the GE Program understand that they have a responsibility to not only help students meet the SLOs for the course, but the PLOs for the GE program? Are instructors incorporating the GE PLOs into their teaching methodology, assignments, and subsequently assessment measures?
4. Does everyone understand what each of the GE PLOs mean, and how they might be operationalized into a classroom format?

The debriefing session with the participants from the 2013 assessment led to similar, more college-based concerns. The session took place in a routine NAC meeting in order to involve more members of the committee in the process. The discussion included discipline members from Art, Psychology, Kinesiology, English, Math, Early Childhood Education, Anthropology, Sociology, and History. The data and main findings were shared with the group and the following discussion topics emerged.

1. Do the current GE PLOs truly represent the Institution? Is the institution more than just the GE program? Can the GE PLOs continue to be recognized as the college ILOs when many of the paths of study available to students at Norco involve certificate programs that are not currently incorporated into the GE program? Do we need to create separate GE PLOs and ILOs?
2. Are CTE courses responsible to support students in obtaining the 4 ILOs? Each newly revised CTE Course Outline of Record has to show alignment to the 4 GE PLOs/ILOs and yet it is unclear as to the actual responsibility or acknowledged contribution that CTE makes to supporting students attaining global awareness and self-identity,

critical thinking, communication skills, and information competency and technology literacy.

3. Are all of the current GE PLOs actually appropriate for each of the GE courses offered at the college For example, do the sciences have a GE outcome that clearly aligns with their content?
4. Is faculty actually aware that they need to include the GE outcomes in the planning of their courses? Hence they need to account for the content of the course, supporting the SLOs, and the GE PLOS. Should the syllabus list both the SLOs and the GE PLOs for the aligned courses?

Next Steps

This information will now be shared with the Norco Assessment Committee and the Academic Senate to determine if any action needs to be taken. It would seem that further discussions about the GE Program level Outcomes are warranted, especially with regard to SLO-PLO alignment, level of faculty understanding regarding their role in helping students attain the four GE PLOs, and whether the current GE PLOs should also serve as the ILOs.