

GE Assessment Plan 2012-2013

Background

A CSU, Chico team representing Pathway Coordinators and the GE Implementation Team participated in a CSU system-wide GE assessment conference in October, 2011. The action Plan for CSU, Chico coming out of that meeting established the goal of “an agreed upon systematic approach to the assessment of student learning of GE SLOs that results in an overall review of the program in a five year period from its implementation in Fall 2012.” The plan specified that CAB would develop this plan in consultation with Pathway Coordinators and faculty. The plan also indicated that our GE assessment would involve collecting “signature assignments” from GE courses and would explore the feasibility of longitudinal study of student learning by assessing the work of a random sample of 400 students throughout their GE careers.

Overarching priorities

Achieving faculty buy-in. Instructors must see that the work of assessment is valuable to their own teaching, that they have input into how it is conducted, and that it is incorporated as seamlessly as possible into the regular work of teaching.

Assessing the program, not the courses. Assessment should determine how well the GE Pathways program as a whole is achieving program goals and student learning outcomes, not how well a given course achieves its GE-ness.

Focus on collaboration for instructional improvement. The assessment process must be open, shared, and useful. The target is always improved student learning through creative and collaborative faculty efforts, not evaluation of individual courses or instructors.

Recommendations

With this framework in mind, the Assessment Subcommittee has met throughout the Spring 2012 semester to discuss assessment priorities, resources, and strategies. We offer the following recommendations.

1. **SLO-based assessment.** Rather than assessing whole courses for their contributions to GE, assessment will be based on the SLOs identified with each course. Two SLOs will be assessed each year, so that all 10 SLOs are assessed in a 5-year cycle.
2. **Signature assignments.** An instructor teaching a course that addresses a targeted SLO will select an assignment that she or he believes can be used to measure achievement of that skill or value. All student work on these assignments will be housed in STEPS, an electronic repository. We are exploring possibilities for an interface between STEPS and Blackboard Learn.
3. **Rubrics.** A common rubric will be applied to these assignments, developed in collaboration with Pathway coordinators and faculty. Pathway faculty using these assignments will be

encouraged to use the rubrics themselves at the time of grading the assignments, so that each assignment will have an additional reader.

4. **Review of student work.** Pathway Coordinators and members of CAB will review a random sample of student work on the signature assignments using a common rubric. This review will occur on specified dates at the end of fall and/or spring semesters, perhaps over the course of a two-day workshop.
5. **Feedback loops.** Results of SLO-based assessments will be reported to pathway faculty. These reports will highlight innovative and successful practices that seem to contribute to student success with these SLOs, make recommendations for adjustments where appropriate, and create opportunities for further collaboration and innovation among pathway faculty working with these SLOs.
6. **Prioritizing writing and critical thinking.** These two GE SLOs have, for different reasons, been at the center of attention in the program implementation phase. These skills are also cornerstones to the success of the GE program as a whole. For these reasons, these will be the first two SLOs assessed in AY 2012-2013. Data will be gathered in fall and spring, with the actual assessment occurring in at the end of fall and/or spring semester.
 - a. **Writing:**
 - i. Signature writing assignments will be gathered from (a) all spring A2 Foundation courses (JOUR 130 and ENGL 130), (b) all fall and spring lower division WI courses, and a (c) sample of courses specifying Written Communication as an SLO.
 - ii. Review of data from assessment rubrics will be used to compare (a) the success of writing instruction across classes of various sizes, (b) the success of writing instruction using various pedagogies, and (c) the success of writing instruction across pathways (noting that some courses serve multiple pathways).
 - b. **Critical Thinking:**
 - i. Faculty from Area A3 courses (CMST 255, GEOS 104, PHIL 102 and PSYC 100) will meet to decide an appropriate approach to assessing the critical thinking skills specified for these courses.
7. **Longitudinal data.** The collection of student work from Area A2 courses will provide baseline data on student writing that will enable longitudinal tracking of student writing from first year through graduation. The use of STEPS (or a similar database) will allow us to archive student work and analyze student work over the course of their academic careers.
8. **Pathway SLOs.** Pathway coordinators should be given latitude to design and implement their own assessment plans for achievement of the thematic goals of the pathways.