General Education Program Assessment – 2024-2025 Report

The **General Education Program Assessment** was conducted on November 25, 2024 - as part of our annual Assessment Week activities. This year, 84 people from across campus volunteered to read portfolios and 8 members of the Early College department joined as recorders. The readers represented a diverse group of individuals from across the campus, including: academic transfer and CTE faculty, instructional administration, Teaching and Learning Center designers, and various student services offices (including advising and the library). We had a large number of nursing faculty attend this year, and their perspective was very valuable to all reading teams. Qualitative data was collected from reading team discussions and from written feedback provided by individual readers. This report presents trends in the data that were collected and suggests next steps to close the assessment loop.

Student demonstration of competency in program goals in submitted artifacts:

Critical Thinking and Real-World Application:

- Students demonstrate the ability to critically analyze and apply concepts to real-world scenarios (e.g., assignments like the Great Element Debate and WWI magazine project).
- They show enthusiasm in engaging with assignments that allow personal reflection and creativity, such as wellness-related projects and interdisciplinary coursework.
- Assignments that scaffold tasks—like moving from brainstorming to formal presentations—yield higher-quality work and deeper understanding.

Skill Development:

- Students excel in building "durable skills," including time management, self-reflection, and problem-solving. These are reinforced by structured assignments with clear deadlines and expectations.
- Communication skills, both written and oral, are frequently demonstrated and praised. This aligns with students being able to effectively articulate their understanding of learning outcomes.

How we would like to see improvement of competencies in student work:

Depth of Work:

- A recurring theme is that some students produce work that lacks depth. While they meet the minimum requirements, they fail to fully engage with assignments or demonstrate deeper critical thinking.
- Reflection is often superficial, with students not progressing to the "Now what?" phase of analyzing their learning and its implications.

Research and Analytical Skills:

- Students need more guidance in conducting and applying research. For example, some persuasive essays and projects lack strong evidence or clear articulation of positions.

- Assignments focusing on analysis, such as contrasting perspectives or using data to draw conclusions, show room for growth.

How faculty are providing students opportunities to demonstrate competencies:

Effective Assignment Design:

- Faculty are creating assignments that are meaningful, engaging, and relevant to real-world contexts. For example, assignments in STEM, history, and communication classes emphasize problem-solving and critical thinking.
- Rubrics and instructions are generally clear, reducing confusion and enabling students to understand expectations.

Focus on Real-World Skills:

- Many assignments encourage students to connect classroom knowledge with future career skills or societal applications. Examples include budgeting scenarios, mental health plans, and interdisciplinary projects.
- Encouragement of Student Autonomy:
- Assignments provide opportunities for students to make choices and explore alternative solutions, promoting creativity and independent thought.

How faculty can create improved opportunities for students to demonstrate competencies:

Balancing Guidance and Autonomy:

- Faculty sometimes lean too heavily on structured rubrics, which can stifle creativity and critical thinking. Allowing for more flexibility and open-ended exploration would benefit students.
- Dual credit instructors and adjuncts may need additional training and resources to align their teaching with General Education outcomes.

Varying Assignment Quality:

- Some assignments focus more on process than outcome, leading to "busy work" perceptions among students. For example, students prefer meaningful tasks that challenge their thinking rather than rote exercises.

How we can provide institutional support for student and faculty improvement:

Student Support:
- Incorporate Student Feedback:

- o The institution should actively seek and incorporate student feedback as a part of the overall assessment of General Education.
- Enhance Student Support Services:
  - o Invest in and promote available support services to ensure students have the resources they need to succeed.
  - o Regularly assess and update support services.
- Foster Faculty-Student Relationships:
  - o Encourage and support strong faculty-student relationships through professional development and mentoring programs.
- Encourage Reflection and Growth:
  - o Incorporate pre- and post-assessment reflections to track student growth. This could include self-evaluations and peer feedback.
  - o Design assignments that require students to consider the implications of their learning, addressing the "Now what?" question.
- Improve Research Skills:
  - o Provide workshops or embedded sessions on conducting effective research and developing persuasive arguments.
  - o Create assignments that explicitly require evidence-based reasoning and critical analysis.
  - o Incorporate experiential learning opportunities, including internships, service projects, and community-based assignments.
  - o Expand interdisciplinary projects to help students apply knowledge across various fields.

Faculty Support:

- Promote Collaborative Assignment Design:
  - o Encourage faculty to collaborate on developing interdisciplinary assignments that address multiple General Education goals.
  - o Offer professional development focused on designing assignments that balance structure with creativity.
- Address Gaps in Dual Credit Instruction:
  - o Ensure dual credit instructors receive training and resources to align their courses with General Education goals and expectations.
  - o Involve more dual credit faculty in portfolio reviews to improve consistency and understanding of program objectives.
- Further Integrate "Connect" and "Be Well":
  - o Develop assignments that explicitly address these goals, such as projects linking coursework to societal challenges or wellness initiatives.
  - o Highlight the importance of these competencies through faculty workshops and student orientation sessions.
- Curriculum Innovation:
  - o Regularly review and update course content to remain relevant to industry trends and student interests.
  - o Introduce capstone courses, internships, or experiential learning opportunities that align with General Education goals.

- o Revamp any General Education courses that do not fully align with program goals, emphasizing critical thinking and connection to real-world contexts.
- o Expand elective offerings to include diverse, interdisciplinary, and innovative subjects.

What are our next steps?

✓ The results of the reading and the faculty feedback from the January in-service have been shared with the TLC and they are in the process of developing workshops that clearly respond to our assessment findings. Workshops will be offered this spring (Tabletop Discussions) and early next fall semester (In-Service Mini-Conference Presentations).

✓ We hope to include more readers from the community in the next assessment cycle. Their input can help us better connect our program of general education to issues and ideas outside the classroom. We want to stay current with the "real world" our students our moving into and the knowledge/skills they will need to succeed there.

✓ We hope to create more opportunities for student voice in the assessment process. We did reach out to students, but the timing made it difficult for them to attend. We are working with the assessment committee to create multiple points of contact for student involvement.

✓ We will revise the Canvas shell to allow for instructors to explain more about where each artifact falls in terms of student ability in relation to the rest of the class (below average, average, or above average). This allows readers to understand more about the class as a whole – while only looking at one artifact.

✓ There have been requests for feedback on submitted assignments, so this year's Canvas shell has a place where faculty can request assignment feedback from the TLC. The TLC will be reaching out to those instructors individually and are also working on a peer-evaluation rubric that can be used for workshops where collective review is made possible.

✓ There have been requests (especially from Dual Credit faculty) for an assignment repository where they could get ideas from other CSI faculty. The TLC will begin looking into how this may be possible.