



COLLEGE OF  
SOUTHERN  
IDAHO

**Ad-Hoc Report**

**College of Southern Idaho**

**March 2020**

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## Introduction

The College of Southern Idaho (CSI) hosted a Year Seven Peer-Evaluation Team in the spring of 2015, following its first compressed seven-year evaluation cycle. At the conclusion of that visit, the college received the following recommendation:

*Recommendation 2: It is recommended that the institution continue to fully develop a process for use of student learning outcomes at the program and degree level, including (1) development of identifiable and assessable student learning outcomes for the general education component of transfer and applied degree/certificate programs, aligning with and supporting the goals and intended outcomes of the general education program; (2) dissemination and publication of student learning outcomes for all degree programs; and (3) integration and utilization of program level assessments to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to student learning achievements. (Standards 2.C.10, 4.A.3, 4.B.1, 4.B.2)*

In correspondence from the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCCU) dated July 2, 2015, the college was instructed to address this recommendation in conjunction with its 2018 Mid-Cycle Self-Evaluation Report and visit. In response, an ad-hoc report was submitted to NWCCU and was reviewed by a two-person peer-evaluation team during the college's regular Mid-Cycle visit conducted April 8-9, 2018. Following that visit, the college received correspondence from NWCCU dated October 10, 2018 requesting that the college "again address Recommendation 2 of the Spring 2015 Year Seven Peer Evaluation Report in an Ad Hoc Report without visit in Spring 2020." The following report is intended to meet that request and summarizes progress that has been made in addressing the recommendation since the original 2015 visit.

In order to provide readers with a comprehensive overview of the work that has been done, much of the language from the 2018 Ad-Hoc Report has been preserved here. Additionally, because the 2018 peer evaluators did not specifically name areas of the recommendation that had or had not been addressed, some language from their 2018 Peer-Review Report has been included in this report in order to aid in understanding. Finally, updates have been provided to indicate progress that has been made since the spring of 2018.

### **Response to Recommendation 2 (Standards 2.C.10, 4.A.3, 4.B.1, 4.B.2)**

As was noted in the college's initial response to Recommendation 2 immediately following the Year Seven Peer-Evaluation in 2015, despite the existence of an institutionalized program-level outcomes assessment process for all instructional programs at the college, the 2015 Year Seven Self-Evaluation study and visit revealed that student learning outcomes at CSI were not defined, published, and assessed in a consistent manner within that process. Additionally, while student learning outcomes had been defined for each component of general education at the college, they had evolved within discrete units, rather than being intentionally integrated into a larger program of general education. Since that time, the college has taken several specific steps to address the issues raised in the recommendation. Due to the complexity of its wording, the recommendation is addressed below in discrete sections, each connected to specific phrases within the recommendation.

#### **Section One**

**(Recommendation 2: It is recommended that the institution continue to fully develop a process for use of student learning outcomes at the program and degree level, including...)**

At the time of the 2015 Year Seven Self-Evaluation Report and visit, the college was using a program assessment process that had been in place for the previous 10 years. In that system, departments were required to produce a three-part annual program evaluation that included a program profile, an assessment of program resources, and an assessment of student learning outcomes. During the 2015 accreditation visit the evaluation committee concluded that the existing process lacked consistency in understanding, execution, and documentation. While the recommendation language acknowledged that the process existed, it also noted that it was not fully developed. Several steps have been taken since 2015 to modify and more fully develop this process, as is outlined in sections two through four of this report. It should also be noted that this process is continually assessed and refined, and therefore will always be “in development.”

At this point, it is important to understand the college’s interpretation of the phrase “program and degree level” within the recommendation. CSI currently has approximately 120 completion options contained within 79 majors/programs. Each completion option is housed within a major/program. Some majors/programs have multiple completion options. For example, students in the Culinary Arts Program have three completion options: a Basic Technical Certificate, an Intermediate Technical Certificate, and an Associate of Applied Science Degree. Other majors/programs have a single completion option, as is the case in the English Program, in which the only completion option is an Associate of Arts Degree. It is important to note that CSI considers (as does this report) the terms “program” and “major” to be synonymous. Moreover, student learning is assessed at this program/major level, rather than at the degree (Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Engineering, and Associate of Applied Science) level. The degree level is simply considered to be a completion option within a major/program.

## **Section Two**

***(Recommendation 2: (1)...development of identifiable and assessable student learning outcomes for the general education component of transfer and applied degree/certificate programs, aligning with and supporting the goals and intended outcomes of the general education program;)***

### **Background**

Historically, the College of Southern Idaho operated within a standard set of general education requirements tied directly to policies established by the Idaho State Board of Education. In an effort to aid student transfer from community colleges to universities within Idaho, that general education system offered very little flexibility. Associate degree transfer students were required to take a core of 36 semester credits of general education, regardless of major, within the following categories:

Oral Communication	2-3 credits
Written Communication	6 credits
Mathematics	3 credits
Science	7-8 credits
Social Science	6 credits
Humanities	6 credits
Any additional general education course(s)	4 credits
Total	36 credits (minimum)

While the college had specific student learning outcomes at the course level for each of the courses in these categories, along with general guidelines regarding student learning expectations for each of the six categories, as was noted in the 2015 Year Seven Peer-Evaluation report, there were no “fully identified

and published learning outcomes that [were] assessable and provide[d] evidence of an integrated course of study in the general education core.” In short, the disparate parts were being assessed, but there was no assessment of a collective program of general education.

Concurrent with the Year Seven Self-Study and visit in 2015, the State of Idaho was revising statewide general education and transfer policies in an attempt to clarify student learning expectations and to allow some freedom for institutions, particularly community colleges, to implement high-impact educational practices and to better assess the general education core. This work led to several changes in the general education core at CSI and has created an environment better suited to evaluation of student learning at the program level in general education.

### Current State

The current general education core requirements at the State level require the following:

Oral Communication Integrative Skills	2-3 credits
Written Communication Integrative Skills	6 credits
Mathematical Ways of Knowing	3 credits
Scientific Ways of Knowing	7-8 credits
Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing	6 credits
Humanistic and Artistic Ways of Knowing	6 credits
Institutionally Designated Credits	4-6 credits
Total	36 credits (minimum)

These changes at the State level, along with CSI’s need to better assess general education at the program level, led the college to fully reevaluate its general education requirements in 2016. This process included the following major milestones:

- May 2016: A full-day General Education and Assessment Town Hall Discussion, followed by the formulation of an Action Plan, attended by more than 100 faculty and staff
- August 2016: Results of the Town Hall were shared with the campus and a pilot project was initiated
- March 2017: A General Education Follow Up Survey was administered in an attempt to craft a shared philosophy of general education
- Spring 2017: Initial sections of Introduction to General Education (GNED 101) were piloted
- Spring 2017: Collaborative course development meetings were held to enhance the design of GNED 101
- Fall 2017: All new degree-seeking students were required to take GNED 101
- Fall 2017: Meetings began to formulate an assessment plan for the general education program

As a result of these input and design opportunities, the college made several structural changes devoted to addressing the needs outlined in Recommendation 2. Most notably, in 2015 the Fine Arts Department at the college was reorganized into the Visual, Performing, and Liberal Arts Department and was given oversight of the program of general education. This change was significant, as it placed the program of general education within a specific college department for the first time rather than having each department responsible for its own general education courses, absent any defined central organizational structure. Furthermore, in 2017 the Visual, Performing, and Liberal Arts Department was split again with General and Liberal Studies becoming its own department, breaking off from Visual and Performing Arts. This change was made in further recognition of the leadership and time required to adequately implement and manage the general education assessment reforms taking place at CSI.

Today, the CSI core meets the State policy with the following requirements:

Oral Communication Integrative Skills	3 credits
Written Communication Integrative Skills	6 credits
Mathematical Ways of Knowing	3 credits
Scientific Ways of Knowing	7 credits
Social and Behavioral Ways of Knowing	6 credits
Humanistic and Artistic Ways of Knowing	6 credits
Institutionally Designated Credits	
• GNED 101	3 credits
• Wellness	2 credits
Total	36 credits

There are several significant changes that have occurred at CSI as a part of this work and several more are still in in development.

First, the college has adopted the statewide Ways of Knowing and Integrative Skills as the new student learning outcomes for each of the six prescribed categories outlined above (Appendix A). These outcomes were developed by discipline-area faculty from across the state in face-to-face meetings over several years, and those faculty groups continue to meet annually at the state level. The objectives for each area define what it means to be an “educated person” within each of the six general education Way of Knowing and Integrative Skill areas. Assessment rubrics have been developed at the state level from those student learning outcomes and the college is using these to assess student learning within each area (Appendix B). The implementation of this assessment process is further described in section four of this report.

Next, the college has adopted its own General Education Program Outcomes which integrate the entire program of general education and provide a foundation for general education program assessment. These four outcomes categories (Think, Communicate, Connect, Be Well) provide an identifiable and assessable set of learning outcomes which link directly back to the college’s Student Success Core Theme (Appendix C).

A critical component of the program of general education has been the creation of CSI’s Introduction to General Education (GNED 101) course along with a Wellness requirement, which collectively encompass the college’s Institutionally Designated Credits. As the statewide general education policy became less restrictive, prescribing 30-32 credits of general education, rather than prescribing all 36, CSI was able to develop these institutionally designated credits which reflect the culture of the institution and take advantage of high impact student success practices. Both the GNED 101 and Wellness requirements emanated from the Town Hall and survey processes mentioned earlier in this report. The General and Liberal Studies Department coordinates GNED 101, the Wellness requirement, and the assessment of the General Education Program Student Learning Outcomes of Think, Communicate, Connect, and Be Well, while assessment of Ways of Knowing and Integrative Skills student learning outcomes is handled by the departments aligned with those areas. A visualization of the entire design process can be found in Appendix D.

The college has made significant progress since 2015 in redesigning its general education program by developing identifiable and assessable student learning outcomes for the program of general education which align with and support the goals and intended outcomes of the general education program. This

conclusion was corroborated by the Mid-Cycle evaluation team in its 2018 Peer-Evaluation report which noted that:

“The institution now has clearly defined General Education Outcomes. The College has also engaged in substantive conversations at the local and state level with cross-disciplinary faculty to refine these outcomes and to develop scoring rubrics, all of which were in evidence in the documentation attached to their Evaluation and in our conversations with various constituencies.”

Further, the evaluation team noted that:

“The college has created a process to gather student artifacts to evaluate the Gen Ed program outcomes through Canvas. The college has demonstrated how much work has gone into the development of this assessment process through the creation of the Canvas website and the rubrics used to score the artifacts. The first gathering of artifacts has occurred, and assessment of these artifacts has created a reflective discussion on how to continually improve this process.”

### **Section Three**

#### **(Recommendation 2: dissemination and publication of student learning outcomes for all degree programs ;)**

While program level student learning outcomes existed for all programs other than general education at the time of the 2015 Year Seven Self-Evaluation report and visit, they were not clearly disseminated and published. That deficiency has been corrected and student learning outcomes for all degree programs, including the general education program, are now available in the [College of Southern Idaho Catalog](#). (After clicking on an Instructional Department, program learning outcomes are listed under each program within that department.) Additionally, program student learning outcomes are included in course syllabi. This was also verified by the peer-evaluation team in 2018 which noted that “the College has posted its program learning outcomes on its website for all programs, demonstrating that all programs have them.”

### **Summary Note for Sections One, Two, and Three**

Based upon the work that the college completed prior to the 2018 Mid-Cycle visit, and the assessment of the peer-evaluation team in its 2018 Peer-Evaluation Report, the college believes that evidence exists to demonstrate that Sections One, Two, and Three of Recommendation Two have been met, and in fact had been met at the time of that 2018 evaluation.

That said, there was not sufficient evidence at the time of that 2018 evaluation to demonstrate that Section Four of Recommendation Two had been met, therefore justifying the continuation of the Recommendation. Section Four is addressed below.

### **Section Four**

#### **(Recommendation 2: integration and utilization of program level assessments to inform academic and learning-support planning and practices that lead to student learning achievements.)**

Since 2015, the college has worked diligently to develop and revise processes that establish a more focused and consistent assessment of program level student learning achievements and outcomes. Focus has also been placed on improving reporting processes to ensure that results are readily available and can

be used to inform academic and learning-support planning, and to ensure that information is used to improve student learning.

### Program Level Student Achievement

At the time of the 2018 Mid-Cycle visit the college was finalizing plans for a new system of program review for each of its instructional programs. That system is now in place and the 2018-2019 academic year marked the first full cycle of implementation.

The Program Review Process requires that each instructional program assess achievement within each of the five objectives beneath the college's Student Success Core Theme:

1. Foster participation in post-secondary education
2. Reinforce a commitment to instructional excellence
3. Support student progress toward achievement of educational goals
4. Provide evidence of achievement of student learning outcomes
5. Offer opportunities for student engagement that go beyond the classroom

Data for each program is supplied annually by the Office of Institutional Research showing three-year trends in program enrollment, retention, and degree attainment, data that primarily addresses items #1 and #3 above (Appendix E). These metrics are similar to data used to assess student achievement at the institutional level through the college's strategic planning process and mission fulfillment scorecard, allowing programs to assess their performance against overall college trends. Programs are also given the opportunity to comment on concerns they have about the data, to ask questions about trends, and to request additional information from the Office of Institutional Research. Additionally, programs are asked to provide qualitative data about activities within the department that have taken place in support of instructional excellence, such as professional development activities or work with the college's newly created Center for Instructional Excellence.

### Program Level Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment of student learning outcomes is also reported annually via the Program Review Process. Assessment within instructional programs is coordinated by the department chair or program manager in charge of the particular program. In the case of large programs with multiple faculty (e.g., Education, Nursing) assessment is a combined effort of the numerous faculty within the program. In other instances, a program may be administered and assessed by a single faculty member (e.g., Accounting and Bookkeeping, Diesel Technology). The specific tools used for program level student learning assessment vary by department. In some cases, outcomes align with industry certification exams and/or national technical skills assessments, allowing for those tools to be used to measure student learning (e.g. Career and Technical Education (CTE) Programs). In these areas, the coordination and collection of assessment data is enhanced by the college's CTE Assessment Coordinator (Appendix F). In other cases, capstone experiences are used (portfolios, performances, presentations, etc.) to assess end-of-program learning achievement. These types of assessments are more commonly used in transfer programs. This assessment work has been enhanced through the hiring of an Instructional Designer who has been instrumental in the refinement of student learning assessment design and implementation via her work with the college's instructional deans, department chairs, and faculty.

In the unique case of the program of general education, a formal assessment plan is in place and is maturing as additional cycles of evaluation are completed. As was noted in Section Two of this report, the college has adopted the State of Idaho outcomes expectations within each of the six Way of Knowing and Integrative Skill Assessment categories and has developed outcomes for the overall program of

general education. In the case of the assessment of student learning within the Ways of Knowing and Integrative Skills categories, the task is handled by groups of faculty who offer the specific general education course. These committees are led by the department chair primarily responsible for each particular Way of Knowing or Integrative Skill. The responsibilities of these committees, which already include reviewing and recommending new general education courses within their Way of Knowing or Integrative Skill area, include assessment of the courses offered in that area.

Assessment of the full integrated program of general education, which includes the college's goals of Think, Connect, Communicate, and Be Well, is coordinated by the Department of General and Liberal Studies. Each semester, faculty who teach a General Education course submit an assignment and a student response that best aligns with the General Education program outcome connected to that specific course. Faculty submit these artifacts which are then compiled into student portfolios. These portfolios are representative of the work a student would produce while completing the entire program of General Education at CSI. In other words, each portfolio contains student work aligned with each General Education Way of Knowing, Integrative Skill, and Institutionally Designated Credit area, though the portfolio is not the work of one particular student. Assessment of portfolios takes place in the fall semester following the submission process and is completed by teams of volunteer faculty members from across campus. Assessment results are reported back to faculty annually at fall in-service, giving faculty the opportunity to make improvements to curriculum and instruction prior to each new academic year.

This process is a continuation of the work that began with the 2016 Town Hall Meeting first described on page 5 of this report. A continuation of the pre-Mid-Cycle peer evaluation timeline from page 5 shows the work that has continued around this process:

- Spring 2018: Initial Pilot of General Education Program Assessment Portfolio Workshop
- Summer 2018: Five-member team attended the AAC&U General Education Assessment Conference in Salt Lake City, UT
- November 2018: General Education Program Assessment Portfolio Reviews
- January 2019: CSI Staff attended the NWCCU Assessment Essentials: Assuring Standards of Educational Effectiveness and Quality Improvement Conference in Las Vegas, NV
- Fall 2019: General Education Portfolio Review Norming Sessions Held
- Fall 2019: Second Annual General Education Program Assessment Portfolio Reviews
- Fall 2019: Inaugural CSI Assessment Week (Appendix G)

The submission and collection of data takes place within Canvas, the college's learning management system. The college uses Canvas to design, collect, and align program level student learning assessment outcomes for all of its program, including general education. Canvas is also being used to provide professional development related to program assessment for all areas of campus.

#### Use of Assessment Results for Planning and Continuous Improvement

The coordinated and consistent use of assessment results for planning and continuous improvement is the final step to addressing section four of the recommendation. Currently, planning at the program level is done through the college's Plan for Development process. This process begins with each employee being given the opportunity to submit an Individual Development Plan (IDP) to his or her supervisor outlining strategies that the employee has developed to address specific goals over the coming year (Appendix H).

Supervisors collect IDPs from individuals in their units and compile them into a Unit Development Plan (UDP) which is also aligned with the core themes and objectives of the college's strategic plan (Appendix I). Program leaders use the UDP to link existing assessment results to needs in a particular program. An

example might work like this. A faculty member in the Communication Department observes that students in the introductory communication course are struggling to appropriately use technology during presentations and that these struggles are decreasing the likelihood of students successfully completing the course. When establishing her IDP, the faculty member notes that she would like to address this failing by creating a laboratory space where students would be able to schedule time to practice with the same presentation technology that is available to them in the classrooms where they are giving their presentations. As she completes her IDP, she notes that this goal aligns with the Strategic Plan's Student Success Core Theme (Core Theme Two) objective of supporting student progress toward achievement of educational goals (Objective C) (Appendix J). When reviewing the various IDPs submitted by the department, the chair of the Communication Department discusses this request with the department and places it on the Unit Development Plan as a funding priority for the upcoming year. This UDP is then forwarded to the appropriate instructional dean who evaluates and prioritizes the request in light of its connection to the strategic plan and available resources. Assuming the request is funded and implemented, the department chair and faculty member each review the impact of the implemented strategy on student ability to use technology in presentations and successful completion of the course. This review is done in conjunction with an end-of-academic-year assessment of the UDP.

This integration of planning via the UDP process, program level assessment of student learning, and program level assessment of student achievement, has the college well-positioned to move forward in completing additional cycles of assessment and improvement as it approaches its 2022 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness Report and visit. As was noted in the spring 2018 Mid-Cycle Peer-Evaluation report, "the College has made significant gain in establishing a culture of assessment and evidence-gathering, and these practices are connected to an energized engagement in faculty development."

While work remains to be done, the college has continued to grow from the 2018 peer-evaluation team's assessment that the "College of Southern Idaho's report and the on-site conversations indicate that the institution has made significant progress toward implementing a continuous cycle of assessment and improvement."

### **Conclusion**

Since the spring of 2015, the college has made significant progress in addressing the concerns outlined in Recommendation 2 of the 2015 Year-Seven Peer-Evaluation report and this work has strengthened the college's alignment with Standards 2.C.10, 4.A.3, 4.B.1, and 4.B.2. As this progress report shows, the college is committed to these fundamental changes in process and fully expects to have multiple clear cycles of data available at its 2022 Evaluation of Institutional Effectiveness visit that will demonstrate an integrated and robust system of program level assessment. Moreover, as this report demonstrates, the college is well-positioned to meet the Northwest Commission on College and Universities new 2020 standards addressing these same areas, including 2020 standards 1.B.1, 1.C.5, 1.C.6, and 1.C.7.

## **Appendix**

Appendix A: Ways of Knowing and Integrative Skills Student Learning Outcomes

Appendix B: State Ways of Knowing/Integrative Skills Assessment Rubric

Appendix C: CSI General Education Program Student Learning Outcome Rubrics

Appendix D: Student Learning Assessment Process Visualization

Appendix E: Sample Program Achievement Data

Appendix F: Sample SLO Assessment Data

Appendix G: Assessment Week Agenda and Materials

Appendix H: Blank Individual Development Plan (IDP)

Appendix I: Blank Unit Development Plan (UDP)

Appendix J: 2020 College of Southern Idaho Strategic Plan