



GENERAL EDUCATION PROGRAM ASSESSMENT REPORT, AY 20-21

Background: We celebrated our fourth year of Gen Ed Program Assessment at CSI this year! Again, teams of readers were assigned portfolios of assignments and artifacts representative of the classes a student might take and comprising a sample of the work a student might produce while completing 36 credits of General Education at CSI.

Current Practice: One of the most significant changes to this year's assessment was using a revised rubric. Post-assessment conversations with readers, that were then sustained in General Education Review Committee meetings, revealed a persistent feeling of disconnection between the rubric and what we were trying to achieve in our assessment process. Two issues were identified in these discussions: one, that the previous rubric's category descriptions were based largely on State of Idaho Ways of Knowing outcomes, rather than on our own program goals of Think, Communicate, Connect and Be Well; and, two, that the previous rubric's levels addressed progression through our gen ed program although we have no way of knowing where a student whose work was submitted *is* in that progression. The opportunity to revise the rubric was discussed during August inservice. Based on that feedback, the rubric was revised to reflect what assessment readers have found valuable in the assignments submitted: addressing the "higher level" outcomes on Bloom's taxonomy.

Another significant change to this year's reading was an agreed-upon focus on assessing not only the artifact, but also on assessing the assignment to which the artifact responded. Although our stated focus from the genesis of this project has been to assess student work, from the start in our meetings we organically began to talk about the opportunities assignments gave students to achieve outcomes and about how well the assignments reflected our gen ed program goals. It should be acknowledged that opening oneself up to professional review can feel threatening. However, because this process has always been collegial and has always focused on how we can become better educators, we as a group were accepting of this significant change.

An important procedural change that Program Assistant Amy May implemented this year was responding individually to each faculty member who participated in our process. Her email acknowledged receipt of the submission. Additionally, because faculty have expressed a desire for feedback on submitted assignments and artifacts, the email also asked for clarification about the type of feedback desired. We hope to use answers to revise our future processes.

This year we met in November via Zoom. Readers had been assigned portfolios to read prior to the meeting, and discussed them in their reading teams. In response to feedback from last year, readers were assigned two portfolios rather than four.

Results: Two main themes emerged from reader feedback this year. One, readers commented on the overwhelming improvement of support of gen ed program goals as demonstrated in submitted assignments and artifacts. Two, readers recognized a need for appropriate scaffolding that still allowed for a large degree of student choice and creativity in responding to assignments.

(Note: reader responses were read and tabulated to highlight the most frequent issues of feedback to create the list below)

Evidence of faculty response to meet our Gen Ed goals:

- As mentioned, submitted assignments better support our gen ed program goals and give students appropriate opportunities to Think, Connect, Communicate and Be Well.
- Assignments ask for understanding, application, synthesis and analysis, versus demonstration of content knowledge
- Assignments are appropriately scaffolded
- Faculty reflections reinforce the stronger connection between assignments and our program of general education

Evidence of Student Achievement of our Gen Ed goals:

- Responses are genuine, creative, and reflective
- Students are able to explain what they are learning
- Students are connecting more than they have before

Opportunities for faculty to improve how we meet our Gen Ed goals:

- Create assignments that balance scaffolding with student choice
- Create assignments that move students to higher levels on the rubric
- Create opportunities for substantive reflection versus reflection as an afterthought
- Create assignments that give students opportunities to connect content to their own lives
- Create assignments that are deeply rooted in the program of General Education rather than a particular course
- Assist students in knowing “how to think” when they are used to being “spoon fed” answers
- Submit *both* the assignment and artifact

Opportunities to improve student achievement of Gen Ed goals:

- Encourage responses showing critical thinking rather than emotional energy
- Give options to reflect other than in writing
- Provide bridges between Ways of Knowing in classes other than GNED 101
- Encourage college-level writing in non-writing classes
- Encourage appropriate research / use of outside sources

Opportunities to make the assessment of more value:

- Involve more faculty
- Invite students to read
- Improve feedback to instructors
- Consider developing a separate rubric for artifacts
- Create common assignments for Ways of Knowing
- Better preparation for review; group leaders facilitate conversations during meeting
- Assignment sharing so that faculty can access examples of good assignments
- Ability to see a student’s progression through our program

- Ways of Knowing meetings during inservice rather than the larger group together
- Meet more often in our inter-disciplinary groups

Next Steps: After reviewing reader feedback, our goals for the next year include the following:

1. Improve faculty feedback, especially about assignments not well-supporting our program: to do this, we will use the comments Amy gathers in fall and spring to define the type of feedback faculty desire. We are considering asking for just one submission per *year* rather than per semester. Fewer submissions would allow us to respond more purposefully to each instructor.
2. Share examples of effective assignments: We continue to work with IT to develop a website devoted to Gen Ed / Assessment. Assignments could be shared here. We can also use the suggestion to meet in our Ways of Knowing groups during inservice as a chance to share effective assignments. There exist opportunities to partner with the CIE to offer workshops, as well.
3. Increase faculty participation: Readers over the past three years have commented that they did not fully understand the program of General Education and the intent of our assessment process until they had participated in portfolio reading. So, this participation is valuable, yet it is a challenge to get more than our core faculty to read. Readers suggested creating incentives or even requiring participation on a rotating basis. Our plans to recruit dual credit readers at P20 were put on hold due to Covid, but if there is a conference this summer we will participate.