General Education Program Assessment was again conducted as part of our annual Assessment Week in November. This year, 60 people from across campus volunteered to read portfolios. We benefited from the diverse perspectives from academic transfer and CTE faculty, instructional administration, Teaching and Learning Center designers, and various student services offices, including advising and the library. Qualitative data was collected from reading team discussions and from written feedback from individual readers. This report presents trends in the data that was collected and suggests next steps to close the assessment loop.

Student demonstration of competency in program goals in submitted artifacts:

Connection and application were most often observed by readers in student work this assessment cycle.

- Readers found evidence of students connecting coursework beyond the classroom, to their own lives or to issues in the community. One reader commented on the connections students are making between content and their "inner and outer worlds."
- Relatedly, readers observed that our students are able to apply knowledge gained in the classroom, in meaningful and relevant ways, to their own lives, to the real world, or to what one reader called "larger knowledge structures that are part of higher education."

Additionally, readers commented on depth of reflection in student work and students' ability to think critically and to be open-minded.

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

While some readers found confirmation of deep reflection in student work, many others identified a lack of deep and critical thinking and superficial reflection instead.

Readers wished to see more authenticity and creativity/exploration/innovation in student responses, rather than simply "what the teacher wants to hear." One reader commented that we need to allow for independent thinking and "heterogeneity" rather than over-coaching students about what to say. A powerful observation related to this notion is that "learning to think is world's away from learning to act."

Many readers wished to see more proficient writing skills in the submitted artifacts.

How faculty are providing students opportunities to demonstrate competencies:

Readers commended faculty for giving students choice and variety in how to demonstrate knowledge. Through these options readers could see students "do something" with their knowledge.

Readers appreciated assignments that were purposefully designed to have relevance in students' lives.

Readers recognized that faculty are giving students many opportunities to demonstrate meta-cognition and reflection.

The most effective assignments were characterized by evidence of scaffolding, a clear rubric, and "deep learning" through hands-on, creative or interactive elements.

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

The most frequently submitted feedback to this question was that faculty could provide students more options or variety to demonstrate or achieve outcomes. Readers expressed that the significance of traditional college assignments might not carry over into the real world beyond higher education. Readers encouraged faculty to craft assignments characterized by application and connection. One reader suggested creating assignments that mirrored problems students might face as part of the workforce. Finally, while recognizing how we collect artifacts in Canvas perhaps complicates this idea, faculty were challenged to craft assignments that allowed students to demonstrate competencies using skills other than or in addition to oral and written communication.

Readers felt that some assignments were written with too much direction and that they did not leave enough room for student autonomy or creativity. At the same time, readers also observed that in some instances faculty are not clear about expectations. For instance, what is the definition of "college level"?

Readers wished to see explicit understanding of our Gen Ed goals and more in-depth reflection in comments submitted by faculty about the assignments they choose to submit to our assessment process. One reader also suggested that we ask faculty to discuss where the submitted assignment fits on our rubric.

This assessment cycle readers were also asked about how our program of General Education, as demonstrated in assessment portfolios, prepares students for future success as learners, employees and citizens. Overwhelmingly, readers agreed that we are preparing students to be critical thinkers and clear communicators. Many readers found evidence of other durable skills, such as time management, perseverance and resilience, and ability to organize. A few readers suggested that we ask students this question about how general education prepares them for success outside of college in our next assessment cycle. Suggestions to improve how we prepare students for future success include increasing opportunities for students to examine "the why," for students to think and apply outside the "self," for students to learn collaboratively or participate in service learning, and to increase energy, time and resources into cross-curricular activities. Considering the increased use of AI in today's world, a few readers mentioned that it will be important to for faculty to keep up with the changing educational environment and the ways in which students acquire information.

Both in written feedback from readers and in the larger group discussion there was a sort of clarion call issued for "connection" and "collaboration" in our gen ed program, some examples of which are these ideas:

- More connections between departments in general, including focusing on how different disciplines/Ways of Knowing are connected and creating opportunities for instructors in different disciplines to collaborate, whether on assignments (such as signature assignments) or interdisciplinary courses. Another idea was to identify a "motif" that could be touched on in different Gen Ed courses from different disciplines in a semester or year.
- More connections between Gen Ed outcomes and the "larger picture of learning" and more connections between the program of Gen Ed and the larger world/society.
- Bridge the imagined divide between Gen Ed and CTE programs. Can we create assignments that connect these two worlds?

- Create opportunities for students to interact with other parts of the campus or community to demonstrate knowledge.

What are our next steps?

These results 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 and early next fall semester.

We hope to include 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 hope to create opportunities for general education and CTE instructors to connect and to discuss general education can better support the needs of CTE students.

We will revise the Canvas shell to allow for instructors to explain how the assignment they submit fits on the rubric.