

**Western Nevada College**  
**Fall 2017 Liberal Arts Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Report Summary**  
**June 18, 2018**

This report summarizes Liberal Arts Assessment Report findings for the fall 2017 semester. It is divided into the following sections:

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**Introduction**

During the fall 2017 semester, both the General Education Committee and the Curriculum Committee voted to merge previously defined General Education Student Learning Outcomes (GESLOs) and Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs) into one joint list of WNC Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs). For more information, please see [the December 2017 memo](#) located on the [WNC SLO webpage](#).

The following WNC SLOs guide all courses, programs, and degrees offered by WNC. SLOs 1-6 provide the structure for general education and alignment for academic program outcomes, while SLO 7 provides a connection for career preparation emphases.

<b>Table 1</b> <b>WNC Student Learning Outcomes</b>	
<b>Student Learning Outcome</b>	<b>Short Title</b>
1. Identify, describe, and apply information, theories, methodologies and approaches from the sciences, social sciences, and humanities/arts.	Working Knowledge
2. Write effective projects, papers, and reports.	Written Communication
3. Present accurate calculations and symbolic operations, and explain how such calculations and operations are used in either the specific field of study or in interpreting information in other fields.	Quantitative Literacy
4. Locate, evaluate, and appropriately use information from multiple resources to complete projects, activities, and papers.	Information Literacy
5. Describe diverse historical and/or contemporary positions on selected democratic values or practices.	Diversity & Society
6. Integrate knowledge and skills from the study of sciences, mathematics, social sciences, and the humanities/arts to think critically about and develop solutions to contemporary and/or enduring problems.	Critical thinking
7. Identify, describe, and apply information in the discipline or career area of their choice sufficient for further study and/ or demonstrate competencies required to succeed in the workplace.	Career Preparation

In collaboration with VPASA Scott Morrison, academic division directors, and academic faculty, Planning and Assessment Coordinator Mandy Billings developed course assessment reporting tools on the JotForm platform for Liberal Arts (LA) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) divisions. Academic faculty were introduced to the new reporting form during fall division meetings and given a March 30 deadline for submitting fall 2017 assessment reports. Assessment report due dates, example reports, and other resources were available on the new [WestNET Assessment page](#) (link requires intranet login).

The JotForm Assessment Report form is similar in format and content to the previous Google Form version. One significant difference is that many response fields now contain limited reporting options that must be selected from a pre-defined dropdown list, reducing some of the confusion caused by previously open-ended response options. It was recommended that faculty select one SLO for each Assessment Report submitted; faculty were not expected or required to select multiple, or all, SLOs for assessment. In these reports, faculty identified key assignments, projects, or tasks that serve as indicators to assess specific SLOs. Student performance on indicators was measured by evaluating whether students achieved the **Threshold** or **Target** for a given indicator:

- **Threshold:** At least 50% of students achieve 70% on assessment
- **Target:** At least 70% of students achieve 70% on assessment

### **Section 1: Summary of Liberal Arts Course Assessments for Fall 2017**

The following table includes all Liberal Arts courses that reported conducting course-level SLO assessment during the fall 2017 semester. The table lists the course, SLO achievement levels for all SLOs assessed, and whether an improvement plan is under consideration for the assessment process moving forward.

As noted in the introduction, faculty were not expected or required to assess all SLOs for each course, given that some SLOs may not be applicable for some courses. Faculty were instead encouraged to pick one SLO to assess, though some did assess multiple applicable SLOs. For the SLOs assessed by reported courses, the below table indicates whether the threshold level, target level, or neither level of achievement was met.

Evidence of an improvement plan has been loosely defined to include any discussion of changes to the course's assessment process in the future. For example, discussion of changing the directions for an assignment used for assessment, of changing the delivery of lecture content leading up to the assessment, or changes in how student work is evaluated in order to more accurately assess SLO achievement would all be considered evidence of an improvement plan for the assessment.

**Table 2**  
**Summary of Liberal Arts Course Assessments for Fall 2017**

<b>Course Assessed</b>	<b>SLO 1</b>	<b>SLO 2</b>	<b>SLO 3</b>	<b>SLO 4</b>	<b>SLO 5</b>	<b>SLO 6</b>	<b>SLO 7</b>	<b>Improvement Plan?</b>
<b>ANTH 101</b>	Not Assessed	Threshold Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Threshold Met	Threshold Met	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>ART 141</b>	Target Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>ART 160</b>	Target Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	No
<b>BIOL 100</b>	Target Met	Not Assessed	Target Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>BIOL 190</b>	Threshold Met*	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>ENV 101</b>	Not Assessed	Threshold Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>HIST 101</b>	Neither Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>HIST 102</b>	Not Assessed	Neither Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Neither Met	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>MATH 120</b>	Target Met	Not Assessed	Neither Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>MATH 126</b>	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Threshold Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>MATH 181</b>	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Neither Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Yes
<b>MUS 176</b>	Target Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	No
<b>NUTR 121</b>	Threshold Met	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	Not Assessed	No
<b>PHYS 181**</b>	<i>See note below</i>							Yes

\*BIOL 190 conducted two separate assessments of SLO 1. One assessment saw students achieve at the threshold level and one saw students achieve at the target level. Given this, the table above indicates that both assessments saw students achieve at least the threshold level for the given SLO.

\*\*Dr. Herring has put together a thorough and thoughtful assessment report for PHYS 181 that tracks student performance on a subject-specific exam administered in a pre/post-test format, and correlates the learning gain on that exam with overall course performance from spring 2012 through fall 2017. Though the structure of this report is not explicitly aligned with the current listing of WNC SLOs, it is

clear that multiple SLOs are being assessed in PHYS 181, and that the assessment process already in place for PHYS 181 could be used to successfully track achievement levels for specific SLOs moving forward.

### **Notes on Section 1: Summary of Liberal Arts Course Assessments for Fall 2017**

This assessment reporting process for courses at WNC is relatively new and continues to undergo revision. This is the second year that an online reporting form has been used to collect course-level SLO assessment results, and as noted in the introduction, changes were made to the platform, structure, and content of the reporting form for 2017-18.

Only 14 Liberal Arts courses reported conducting assessments during the fall 2017 semester, down from 22 courses during the previous fall. Of the 13 reporting specific SLO assessment, 3 (23%) did not assess students achieving any SLOs at either the threshold or target levels.

The low levels of assessment reporting make it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions regarding SLO achievement in Liberal Arts courses during the fall 2017 semester. Based on many conversations with faculty, academic division directors, and the VPASA, it is likely that more assessment is being conducted than is being reported for a variety of reasons. These include a lack of training and communication around how and why to report assessment results via the new JotForm reporting tool; lack of direction and collaboration in designing course-specific assessments within disciplines and divisions; confusion around changing SLOs, course-specific learning outcomes, and strategic plan key performance indicators (KPIs); and concerns regarding how assessment data will be used in faculty evaluation. Section 3 of this report will continue this discussion with recommendations for improving course-level SLO assessment and reporting moving forward.

## Section 2: SLO Achievement Comparison to Previous Year

The following table compares SLO achievement levels for those courses assessing the same SLOs during both the 2016-17 reporting year and fall 2017. Only 7 Liberal Arts courses reported conducting assessments for the same SLOs across both reporting periods.

Course Assessed	SLO Assessed	Achievement Level		Achievement Level Change
		2016-17 Reporting Year*	Fall 2017	
<b>BIOL 100</b>	SLO 1: Working Knowledge	Target	Target	↔
	SLO 3: Quantitative Literacy	Target	Target	↔
<b>BIOL 190</b>	SLO 1: Working Knowledge	Neither	Threshold	↑
<b>HIST 101</b>	SLO 1: Working Knowledge	Target	Neither	↓
<b>HIST 102</b>	SLO 2: Written Communication	Threshold	Neither	↓
<b>MATH 120</b>	SLO 1: Working Knowledge	Neither	Target	↑
	SLO 3: Quantitative Literacy	Threshold	Neither	↓
<b>MATH 126</b>	SLO 3: Quantitative Literacy	Neither	Threshold	↑
<b>MATH 181</b>	SLO 3: Quantitative Literacy	Neither	Neither	↔

\* All courses reporting in the 2016-17 reporting year conducted assessments during the fall 2016 semester. A small number also included assessment data from the spring 2017 semester, and/or from earlier semesters. It is therefore difficult to make a direct fall-to-fall comparison between these two collections of assessment data.

### Notes on Section 2: SLO Achievement Comparison to Previous Year

Given the small number of Liberal Arts courses reporting repeated SLO assessment during these reporting periods and the developing nature of the assessment process, the achievement comparison in Table 3 should not be used as a primary indicator for course quality. Instead, attention should be given to the reflections faculty provided when submitting assessment reports. For example, history faculty noted issues with ensuring anonymity of student papers being assessed by multiple readers even after removing student names, as well as how their assessment rubric was used. In this case, issues with the assessment process may have contributed to SLO achievement levels for fall 2017. All of the courses assessing the same SLOs across both reporting periods have improvement plans in place as well.

**Section 3: Student Learning Outcomes Not Assessed or Infrequently Assessed in Liberal Arts**

The following table outlines the number of Liberal Arts courses assessing specific SLOs both from fall 2017 and from the previous reporting year.

<b>Table 4 Liberal Arts SLO Assessment Frequency</b>				
	<b>2016-17 Reporting Year*</b>		<b>Fall 2017</b>	
<b>SLO Assessed</b>	<b># Courses Assessing (out of 22*)</b>	<b>% Courses Assessing</b>	<b># Courses Assessing (out of 13**)</b>	<b>% Courses Assessing</b>
SLO 1: Working Knowledge	21	96%	8	62%
SLO 2: Written Communication	6	27%	3	23%
SLO 3: Quantitative Literacy	4	18%	4	31%
SLO 4: Information Literacy	4	18%	0	0%
SLO 5: Diversity and Society	1	5%	1	8%
SLO 6: Critical Thinking	9	41%	2	15%
SLO 7: Career Preparation	3	14%	0	0%

\*All courses reporting in the 2016-17 reporting year conducted assessments during the fall 2016 semester. A small number also included assessment data from the spring 2017 semester, and/or from earlier semesters. It is therefore difficult to make a direct fall-to-fall comparison between these two collections of assessment data.

\*\*While 14 courses submitted assessment reports for fall 2017, only 13 specifically identified SLO achievement.

**Notes on Section 3: SLO Assessment Frequency**

As anticipated, SLO 1 continues to be the most frequently assessed SLO as most faculty already have classroom assignments and projects in place that clearly serve as indicators for working knowledge of specific course material. Faculty have shared anecdotally that it can be difficult to develop strategies for assessing SLOs that appear to be less concrete or to have weaker alignment with a specific course.

## Section 4: Recommendations for Future Course Assessment Reports

Last year, the 2016-17 academic year, was the first year that course-level SLO assessment was reported in this format. In last year's summary report, a number of recommendations were offered. This final section will review whether recommendations from last year were implemented or addressed, and will also offer new recommendations for the upcoming year.

### Previous Recommendations and Action Taken

- **Standardize Assessment Report form responses by limiting response options.** This recommendation called for limiting open response options for several categories on the reporting form, as the fill-in-the-blank approach for categories like "SLO Assessed" made it difficult to consistently interpret and summarize assessment reports. This was addressed by switching to the JotForm platform and utilizing limited option responses for a number of categories. As a result, the submitted report forms were much more consistent and easier to interpret and summarize.
- **Training and/or detailed FAQ for faculty.** The SLO assessment process and reporting timeline was reviewed at an All Faculty meeting at the beginning of the fall 2017 semester, and a number of related resources (including an example completed JotForm report, an FAQ, and deadline reminders) were posted on a new "Assessment" page located on WestNET. Information about accessing these resources were sent to faculty several times during the 2017-18 academic year.

Other than the initial fall meeting, however, no training or information sessions were held in-person for faculty. Based on the feedback from the fall 2017 assessment reports, in-person training and discussion will be critical moving forward to improve assessment reporting participation. There remains a great deal of frustration, confusion, and concern amongst faculty regarding the assessment process.

- **Concerns if report is made public.** To address this concern, only a summary version of this report without faculty or student identifying information was posted online. Full copies of individual assessment reports were only reviewed by Institutional Research, Division Directors, and Executive Leadership.
- **Focus future reports on unassessed courses and outcomes.** Although conversations were had throughout the year regarding strategies for improving participation and increasing the range of SLOs assessed, a concrete action plan to achieve these outcomes was not yet implemented. As a result, the fall 2017 assessment reports again reflect a small number of courses and limited range of SLOs.

### Recommendations for 2018-19

- **Establish a comprehensive assessment plan for WNC with active support from executive leadership and input from faculty and staff.** Without a solid assessment framework for WNC, conducting professional development to improve the assessment process will be challenging. Establishing clear, consistent annual timelines and processes for assessment at all levels will further define course-level SLO assessment moving forward. A new assessment plan coupled

with a new strategic plan for the college could very well mean changes to the current JotForm reporting process, the SLOs being assessed, and the assessment timeline for faculty. Having that structure in place before beginning in-person professional development opportunities for faculty will be important to ensure delivery of accurate information and to avoid unnecessary confusion and frustration.

As with the development of the new strategic plan, soliciting input from the WNC community as this new assessment plan is developed will be key to creating an assessment plan that is both useable and useful for all involved. Without giving faculty the opportunity for ownership in this process, participation will continue to be low. Additionally, academic division directors and executive leadership must continue to be informed, invested champions of the assessment process to successfully strengthen WNC's culture of assessment across the community.

- **Demystify the assessment process.** One significant challenge in consistently conducting annual SLO assessment is communicating how and why this kind of assessment serves our students and the wider WNC community. Questions that faculty have shared both publicly and privately include:
  - Is course-level SLO assessment being used to evaluate faculty or make employment decisions?
  - How is course-level SLO assessment different than the annual self-evaluation?
  - What are SLOs? How are they different than course-specific learning outcomes? How are they connected to strategic plan KPIs?
  - How do I know if I'm conducting a valid assessment of SLO achievement?
  - Why is the assessment process important, and how will the results be used?
  - Is conducting assessment part of my regular duties as a full-time professor or part-time instructor? Am I being compensated for this work? Can I refuse to participate?

Professional development opportunities, including All Faculty meetings, smaller group trainings by discipline or division, and one-on-one meetings with faculty and academic division directors will be a critical step forward in addressing these and other questions. Online resources should be shared widely and be easier for faculty to access. It will be important, however, to establish a college-wide assessment plan first to clarify how and why course-level SLO assessment fits into the regular annual cycle of activities for academic faculty.

- **Organize assessment development by discipline within divisions.** While some disciplines have an organized, collaborative assessment process in place across all or most sections of given key courses, it is far more common for individual academic faculty to create SLO assessments specific to the sections they are teaching. This can result in multiple sections of the same course reporting wide-ranging SLO achievement levels using very different assessment processes. It also frequently results in only one or two faculty members reporting SLO assessment for a given course, while the remaining sections of the same course forgo reporting assessment altogether.

If all full-time and part-time academic faculty within a discipline had a structure and process in place to meet and develop SLO assessment processes for regularly taught courses, it would likely have a positive impact on participation and consistency in course assessment. Faculty time constraints and questions of compensation for participating, especially among part-time instructors, will be barriers to moving forward with this approach. Despite these and other



anticipated challenges, it will be worthwhile to explore creative options for implementing this recommendation.

- **Seek out professional development opportunities and models from institutions showcasing best practices in assessment.** As we work to develop a new assessment plan for WNC, we should look to leaders in assessment for additional resources, strategies, and ideas. This may include attending conferences and webinars, reviewing books and journal articles, and reaching out directly to other institutions.