

REPORT ON THE ASSESSMENT OF LIBERAL STUDIES CORE CATEGORY C1 (WRITING)

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I. OVERVIEW OF THE CHARGE TO THE ASSESSMENT TEAM

The charge to Liberal Studies Assessment teams indicates that the primary tasks for the members are to (1) use the Liberal Studies rubrics to score samples of student work as a way to determine how well students are achieving the associated outcomes of the Liberal Studies Program, and (2) to review the syllabi of the courses taught in the category under review. The overarching goals of the Liberal Studies assessment are to determine how well students achieve the Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes, and to determine how consistent the goals of the Liberal Studies Program are with what faculty and departments are delivering.

The Guiding Principles for Liberal Studies Program Assessment are to answer the following questions:

- 1) Are we delivering what we say we do?
- 2) Are students learning what we want them to?
- 3) What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?

This results of this team's assessment are thus outlined based upon these guiding principles and questions.

II. LEARNING: A REVIEW OF RANDOMLY SELECTED STUDENT WORK

A total of 57 artifacts (student papers) were used in this assessment. Based upon a randomly generated set of student identification (920-) numbers, a set of papers were collected in the Spring 2015 semester, identifying factors were removed, and the papers were stored in the H-drive for use in the assessment of the C1 (Writing) category of the Liberal Studies Program. Each reviewer was assigned 14 papers to score based on the Liberal Studies Assessment Rubrics (see Appendix A), leaving one artifact unused. All of these papers were examples of student work from English 202 classes, the second course of the sequence of classes required for the fulfillment of the C1 category. Prior to collection, the faculty identified the Liberal Studies Learning Outcome that was best reflected in the assignment. Two outcomes of the Liberal Studies Program were identified by the faculty as relevant to the selected assignments:

1. Demonstrate the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information;
- 3b. Demonstrate the ability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience

The 57 artifacts were the only evidence of student work used for this assessment.

A. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

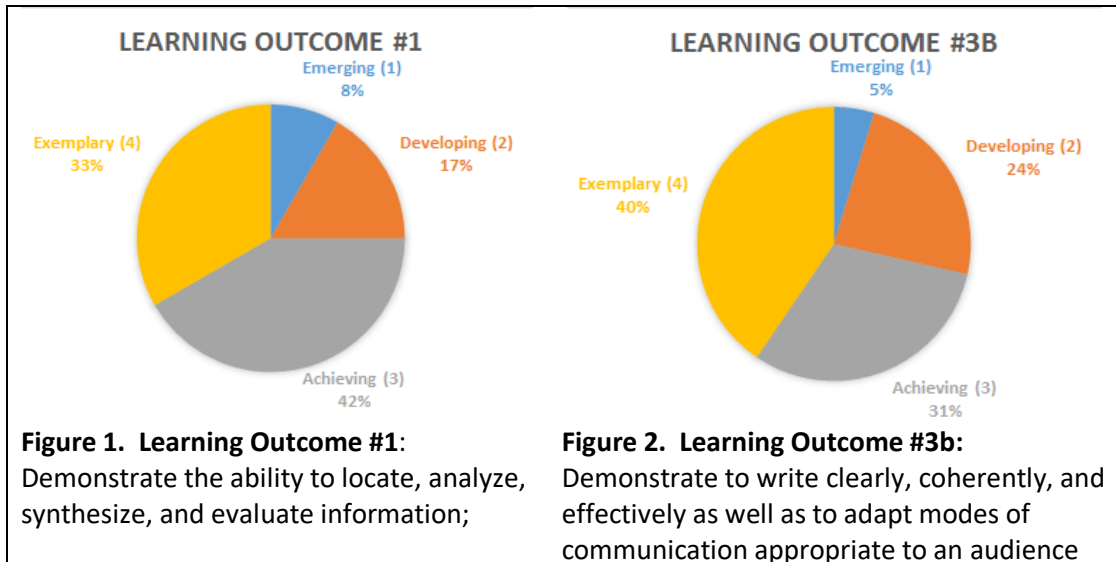
The following table, generated by the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness from the scoring spreadsheets used by the Assessment Team members, indicates the distribution of the ratings assigned to the 56 artifacts scored. Note that two of the artifacts received a rating of “X” which designates irrelevancy of the category to the assignment, or that folders and/or content could not be viewed or assessed. Pie charts in Figures 1 and 2 help to illustrate the percentage of artifacts that were scored at each rating value. Note that ratings of 1, 2, 3, and 4 correspond respectively to “Emerging,” “Developing,” “Achieving,” and “Exemplary” levels of ability.

Outcome	n	Rating					Average	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max
		X	1	2	3	4						
1	12	1	1	2	5	4	3.00	1	2.75	3	4.00	4
3b	42	1	2	10	13	17	3.07	1	2.00	3	4.00	4

Table 1. Table of Raw Data from Scoring Student Work

B. QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Based upon the assessment team’s reading, Western Carolina University’s students in English 202, on average, **demonstrate proficiency in written communication skills**, as viewed through the lens of the first and third student learning outcomes of the Liberal Studies Program.



LEARNING OUTCOME 1: DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO LOCATE, ANALYZE, SYNTHESIZE, AND EVALUATE INFORMATION.

The twelve papers sampled from English 202 for this category indicate that Western Carolina University students are performing at all four levels, from “Emerging” through “Exemplary,” though the majority were performing at the “Achieving” and “Exemplary” levels. The papers sampled indicate all students are able to locate information that supports their arguments, though some students’ referencing skills (e.g. knowing when to include a citation, paraphrasing rather than including a paragraph as a direct quote) warrant attention. The majority (9 out of 12) of the papers demonstrated that our students have the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information adequately. In particular, 25% of the papers sampled demonstrated possession of a refined ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information. Based on this sample of work, the majority of WCU’s students are able to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information adequately, though not all have attained this level of proficiency. The weaker samples of work consistently showed evidence that some of our students do not distinguish between factual information and opinions in their writing, indicating that the ability to analyze and evaluate information is still in developmental stages for a portion of our student population. The only paper from this set to receive a rating of “Emerging” demonstrated some level of deficiency in most if not all of the skills, lacking the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information adequately. Though the author’s identity is unknown, statements in the paper indicated that the author was from another country. The assessment team recognizes that the aforementioned lack of skills could be an indication of targeted needs of our international student population.

LEARNING OUTCOME 3B: DEMONSTRATE THE ABILITY TO WRITE CLEARLY, COHERENTLY, AND EFFECTIVELY AS WELL AS TO ADAPT MODES OF COMMUNICATION APPROPRIATE TO AN AUDIENCE.

The 42 papers sampled from English 202 for this category also indicate that Western Carolina University students are performing at all four levels, from “Emerging” through “Exemplary,” though the majority were performing at the “Achieving” and “Exemplary” levels. Though most papers demonstrated grammatical flaws (e.g. lack of subject/verb agreement, incorrect word usage, misspelled words, and improper punctuation), the extent of these mechanical errors did not typically distract from the author’s ability to communicate clearly, coherently, and effectively to the desired audience. In fact, the most common rating assigned was “Exemplary,” indicating the demonstration of a refined ability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively and, therefore, the ability to communicate effectively to a particularly appropriate audience in a way that exceeds expectations. Forty percent of the papers sampled received the “Exemplary” rating. In some cases, assessment team members noted that the intended purpose and audiences for a paper were not evident, which made it more difficult to assess accurately the effectiveness and appropriateness of the communication. The problems with citing noted in the artifacts associated with Learning Outcome 1 were also evident in this set of papers, though they typically did not greatly distract from the author’s ability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively.

III. FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL DELIVERY: A REVIEW OF SYLLABI

The C1 (Writing) Core category of the Liberal Studies Program consists of two semesters of writing (English 101 in the freshman year and English 202 in the sophomore year). Together this sequence makes up the Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies (WRCS) program housed in the Department of English. As a part of this assessment, syllabi from English 101 and English 202 sections taught in the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters were submitted to the English Department for inclusion in this review. The assessment team used the syllabi as a proxy to determine how well the content of the course reflects the descriptions of the C1 Category and the Liberal Studies Program outcomes as articulated in the Liberal Studies Document. Each syllabus was checked for the explicit statement of C1 Description, Liberal Studies Program Outcomes, and Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies (WRCS) Program Learning Outcomes (See Appendix B). Quantitative results of this review for the Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 semesters are presented in Tables 2 and 3, respectively. The majority of the sections made direct reference to C1 and Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes, as well as the WRCS Program Outcomes, in the course syllabi, though adherence to this practice was higher in the fall semester than the spring semester, indicating a need for greater oversight and review of syllabi prior to the start of the spring semester.

Course	C1 Description		Liberal Studies Outcomes		WRCS Outcomes	
	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
English 101	31	1	29	3	32	0
English 202	24	4	24	4	24	4
Totals	55 (91.67%)	5 (8.33%)	53 (88.33%)	7 (11.67%)	56 (93.33%)	4 (6.67%)

Table 2. Summary of Analysis of Fall 2014 Syllabi
60 Syllabi Submitted to Department for 64 Total Sections

Course	C1 Description		Liberal Studies Outcomes		WRCS Outcomes	
	Present	Absent	Present	Absent	Present	Absent
English 101	31	5	31	5	36	0
English 202	15	8	14	9	15	8
Totals	46 (77.97%)	13 (22.03%)	45 (76.27%)	16 (27.12%)	51 (86.44%)	8 (13.56%)

Table 3. Summary of Analysis for Spring 2015 Syllabi
59 Syllabi Submitted to Department for 62 Total Sections

IV. STRENGTHENING THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT LEARNING AND FACULTY/DEPARTMENTAL DELIVERY

A. REFLECTION ON CHANGES SINCE 2006 CATEGORY C1 ASSESSMENT

The previous assessment of Core C1 Liberal Studies Category was completed in 2006, and the [report of the assessment](#) findings can be found among those listed on the Liberal Studies Program Assessment web site.

It is important to note that the assessment at this time was on the First Year Composition (FYC) program, which made up the C1 Category in the Liberal Studies Program at that time. As noted in Table 4 below, the FYC program was revised to emphasize a critical reading focus in 2008 and the program name was changed to Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies (WRCS) in 2010 to reflect this change in focus. Whereas students were expected to take the English 101 and English 102 sequence of the First Year Composition program in their first two semesters, the course sequence has also been revised to include a first year course, English 101 (Writing and Rhetoric), and a second year course, English 202 (Writing and Critical Inquiry). Thus, Western Carolina University students are expected to complete their C1 Liberal Studies requirements by the end of their sophomore year. Further reflection on this is provided in the Assessment Team's recommendations in Section C.

The recommendations from the 2006 Report on C1 (First Year Composition) Course Assessment, the actions taken in response to these recommendations, and the associated outcomes are summarized in Table 4, presented below.

Recommendation from 2006	Actions	Outcome
Ensure that all syllabi contain semester calendars, reflect unified learning outcomes, and provide students with more detailed descriptions of grading, policies, and assignments	Syllabi are largely compliant with the goal of unified and detailed outcomes and policies (see Section III above). Detailed grading policies, calendars and assignments are consistently achieved.	Successfully Completed
Broaden in-class readings and encourage more assessed critical reading.	FYC (first year composition) switched to a critical reading focus in 2008 and reflected that in the program name (WRCS – Writing, Rhetoric, & Critical Studies) in 2010. It was then reflected in the course names in 2014: 101: Writing and Rhetoric; 202: Writing and Critical Inquiry	Successfully Completed
Strengthen the ties with the Freshman Summer Reading Committee and work to integrate into English 101.	WRCS encourages its faculty to read the annual common reading in English 101. It is not required.	WCU rarely has English faculty on the Common Reading Committee.
Continue to emphasize and improve students’ use of secondary materials on research assignments.	WRCS conducted multiple professional workshops in the years after the last assessment. The curriculum shift from a one-year sequence to a two-year sequence placed significant priority on secondary research in the second year.	While many positive advances have been made, WRCS needs additional focus in this area.
Shift Portfolios and assessment to electronic versions.	All assessment is electronic.	Successfully Completed
Revise the process for portfolio assessment.	WRCS revised assessment protocols three times since 2008 responding to advances in technology and disciplinary best practices.	Successfully Completed
Remove failed students from standard FYC assessment pool and	Assessment protocols within WRCS removed failed students	Successfully Completed/ Needs to be revisited given

move to their own evaluative group.	from the assessment pool until just recently. Given new technology and procedures (relying upon random sampling), the most recent WRCS assessment, as well as this LS assessment, did not remove failed students from the assessment pool. A study of failed students was completed in 2008.	the new technology.
Limit maximum number of FYC sections to three	The English department accomplished this for a couple of years but found the goal impractical after serious budget cuts reduced lecturer numbers considerably.	Completed/Unsuccessful
Improve retention and working conditions for full-time faculty (80% to tenure track) as a strategy for improving student retention	Conditions for full-time faculty have worsened since this assessment due to 4/4 comp loads, raised caps, and lack of consistent pay raises.	Unsuccessful/Situation Worse
Find ways to assist underprepared writers	WRCS established a committee to study Underprepared Writers in 2008. The committee's report and recommendations were submitted to the chair of the English Department, who then forwarded the document to the Dean of Arts and Sciences and the Assistant Provost. The committee received no response from any party despite frequent follow-up calls and emails from the department chair.	Unsuccessful/Situation Worse given addition of significant numbers of ESL students in WRCS classes.

Table 4: A Summary of Recommendations from 2008 Assessment of the C1 Liberal Studies Category, Program Response, and the Associated Outcome.

B. ASSESSMENT OF C1 WRITING CATEGORY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE LIBERAL STUDIES DOCUMENT AND OF BROADER UNIVERSITY-LEVEL ASSESSMENTS

One of the goals of the Liberal Studies Program is to enhance WCU's aspirations for students to attain "the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of an educated person, including the ability to think critically, to

communicate effectively, to identify and resolve problems reflectively, and to use information and technology responsibly; an appreciation for the creative and performing arts; and a basis for continued personal development and lifelong learning." As a part of the Core, the C1 category is to provide students with academic skills and intellectual habits needed throughout the undergraduate experience.

Based upon the samples of student work considered in this assessment, as well as the syllabi submitted for the 2014-2015 academic year, the C1 category is challenging WCU's students to think critically; to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information; and to articulate their findings in a written form in a clear, coherent, and effective manner. It is also clear that the C1 Category provides foundational skills that are intended to be enhanced through continued writing within the major and across disciplines throughout a student's career at Western Carolina University.

This Liberal Studies Assessment Team has been charged with assessing how the Liberal Studies Program, with particular focus on the C1 Category, can help to achieve Goal 1.2 and Initiative 1.2.4 of the 2020 Vision. Goal 1.2 provides a mandate for the educational experience at WCU: "Fully integrate into the general education program and into each major and minor at both undergraduate and graduate levels an emphasis on those core abilities expected of all WCU students: to integrate information from a variety of contexts; to solve complex problems; to communicate effectively and responsibly; to practice civic engagement; and to clarify and act on purpose and values" (p. 20).

No one course or sequence of courses in the Liberal Studies Program is expected to encompass and satisfy all of the goals of the program, including the seven comprehensive student learning outcomes, or the core abilities referenced above. The Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies Program does a more than satisfactory job of providing students with the opportunity to develop and strengthen their critical thinking and written communication skills in the context of thought-provoking topics that are meaningful and relevant to students. In particular, most students enrolled in English 202 are meeting the Liberal Studies objectives for the C1 category along with the parts of Goal 1.2 that were assessed. The assessment team did not analyze students' work beyond what was completed in English 202. Thus, no evaluation can be made to determine if the C1 component of the Liberal Studies program is being integrated into each major and minor at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

With regards to Initiative 1.2.4, which states that WCU is to "ensure all academic programs incorporate the core abilities detailed in Goal 1.2" (p. 20), no evaluation can be made regarding this initiative in this assessment, since the team's work was restricted to consideration of syllabi of English 101 and 202 and student work from English 202 alone.

In terms of broader university-level assessments, the CLA/CLA+ makes claims regarding writing effectiveness. It is to be noted that the institution—not the student—is the primary unit of analysis. The CLA is designed to measure an institution's contribution, or value added, to the development of higher-order skills. WCU freshmen and seniors participated in the CLA in 2007-2008 and 2011-2012. As the reporting of CLA results changed between these implementations, direct comparisons are inappropriate (see Appendix C for CLA Data). The Assessment Team believes the primary result from this standardized

test indicates that, on average, WCU's student writing performance is at a level comparable to other institutions participating in the assessment.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CHANGES BASED ON THREE GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ASSESSMENT

As indicated in the Liberal Studies Assessment charge, the ultimate goal of the assessment as it moves forward is to recommend and implement changes to the Liberal Studies Program, which is to be manifested in revisions to the Liberal Studies Document. The Assessment Team has reflected upon the work of this assessment and the three questions posed in the Liberal Studies Assessment Guiding Principles: 1) "are we delivering what we say we do?" 2) "are students learning what we want them to?" and 3) "what can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?" Our recommendations for changes to the Liberal Studies Program, focusing particularly on implementation of the C1 category, and the Liberal Studies Assessment process, are framed with respect to these questions.

A. RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGES TO THE LIBERAL STUDIES PROGRAM

Are we delivering what we say we do?

In general, the Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies Program provides students with the opportunity to develop and strengthen their critical thinking and written communication skills in the context of thought-provoking topics that are meaningful and relevant to students. Integrating more than the two student learning outcomes (1 and 3[b]) directly assessed in this review, English 101 and English 202 enhance student ability to think critically and to communicate effectively. As such, the Assessment Task Force's recommendation for changes in the Liberal Studies Program are not focused on content, but on implementation.

One issue noted during this assessment is the fact that not all students in English 202 classes are in their sophomore year. Apparently it is not uncommon for these courses to have juniors and graduating seniors enrolled as well. This is contrary to the foundational role of the C1 category and the English 101 and English 202 two-year sequencing as well as the Liberal Studies Program document which states that "[a]ll students are encouraged to complete the Core during their first year of college."

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Ensure students enroll in the English 101 and English 202 sequence prior to the start of their junior year.** The Assessment Team suggests increasing the number of sections of English 101 and 202 offered (not the enrollment in each class) each semester in order to fulfill this recommendation.
- **Review syllabi prior to beginning of the semester.** The Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies program should be responsible for verifying all English 101 and 202 syllabi contain a description of the purpose of the C1 category, the appropriate Liberal Studies Student Learning Outcomes,

and the WRCS Learning Outcomes prior to the start of the semester. These details must be included in the syllabus itself rather than a separate document.

Are students learning what we want them to?

Based upon the sample work, the Assessment Team believes that most students enrolled in English 202 are meeting the Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes specified by their faculty, and demonstrating the core abilities of integrating information from a variety of contexts and communicate effectively articulated in Goal 1.2 of WCU's 2020 Plan.

Although artifacts demonstrated evidence of students' ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information, and the ability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to the intended audience, the Assessment Team members noted a weakness in students' research and citation skills. Several papers reviewed presented opinions or assumptions as fact, lacked citations for ideas or statements that did not appear to be those of the author, or used extensive quotations rather than summarizing concepts from references. Though student papers tended to include minor punctuation, spelling, or grammatical errors, the extent of these mechanical errors did not typically distract from the author's ability to synthesize and evaluate information or to communicate ideas to the desired audience clearly, coherently, and effectively.

Based upon evidence from a few of the artifacts included in this review, and from anecdotal evidence provided by English faculty, students for whom English is a second language (ESL) more often demonstrate lower levels of achievement in terms of the ability to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information (presented in English) as well as the ability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively in this second language. The specialized needs of this population of Western Carolina University's students is also considered in the Assessment Team's recommendations.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Increase the focus on primary and secondary research and citation within the WRCS Program.**
- **Provide additional support for English as a Second Language (ESL) students in English 101 and English 202.** The Assessment Team believes sections of English 101 and 202 should be reserved for ESL students and facilitated by faculty with background and training in teaching students for whom English is a second language. Suggestions include mandating that international students with TOEFL reading and writing scores below a benchmark level (determined by a team of the appropriate faculty and staff) should be required to enroll in these specialized sections. Grades First could be adapted to include a feature that will allow advisors or faculty to identify students who would greatly benefit from participation in an ESL section of English 101 or 202. If a student with such a flag tries to enroll in a non-specialized section of English 101 or 202, permission of the instructor should be required to allow the student to register for the class.

What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?

In addition to ensuring that students have completed the C1 category prior to the start of their junior year, which should provide students with fundamental skills that will be enhanced through further writing within the major discipline, Liberal Studies perspectives, and general elective classes, the Assessment Team recognizes that a renewed focus on writing across and within the disciplines would reiterate the importance of clear and effective writing to all disciplines. Though students complete the C1 category, many faculty may see effective writing as reserved for English classes and irrelevant to their chosen discipline or their success in the future. Careful articulation of the importance of communicating clearly, coherently, and effectively through writing should be present in all program materials and co-curricular activities.

Recommendation:

- **Strengthen ties with Writing Across the Disciplines.** The Assessment Team supports the addition of a full time Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) hire to be a faculty member in the English Department.

Other considerations:

The Liberal Studies Program document has not been revised since December 2007. Since that time, the University's Mission statement has changed, some aspects of the Liberal Studies curriculum have changed (such as adjusting the C1 category from the First Year Writing Program to a two-year sequence in Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Skills), and administrative aspects have changed. The Assessment Team has made suggested book-keeping changes to the Liberal Studies Program document, as indicated in Appendix D, but believes the description of the Writing portion of the Core (referred to as C1) warrants revising.

Recommendation:

- **Revise the description of the Writing portion of the Core.** Currently, the description of the Writing portion of the Core refers to and focuses on the First-Year Composition Program no longer in place rather than the purpose of the required Liberal Studies course sequence. The Assessment Team believes the description should reflect the purpose of the writing portion of the Core (as delivered through a two-course sequence that is a two-year sequence), the placement of the courses in the students college career (within the first and second years), and the Liberal Studies Student Learning Outcomes specifically addressed in this portion of the Liberal Studies Program, though additional student learning outcomes may also be incorporated.
- **Improve working conditions for full-time faculty as a strategy for improving student retention.** This includes restoring caps to pre-budget cut numbers.

B. RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGES TO LIBERAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT

Are we delivering what we say we do?

Syllabi are the only artifacts the reviewers can use to assess what is delivered in the classroom. Although syllabi are intended to provide a minimal guarantee of the expectations for a course, the Assessment Team recognizes that what goes on in the classroom cannot be reflected entirely in a syllabus. The Liberal Studies Program document indicates that “[a]ssessment must make use of multiple methods of collecting both qualitative and quantitative data, such as focus-group discussions; review of syllabi, exams, other course documents; student portfolios; and participant and peer observations (p. 17).” The Liberal Studies Program document also states that two kinds of focus-group interviews should be included in assessment strategies: one with randomly selected students, and another with randomly selected faculty. The current Liberal Studies Assessment Team Charge (effective January, 2015) and this round of assessment did not include any type of focus-group interviews. The Assessment Team believes these could have been helpful in more thoughtfully assessing how well we deliver what we say we do.

Recommendation:

- **Include two kinds of focus-group interviews, one with randomly selected students, and another with randomly selected faculty, in each Liberal Studies component assessment.** The Liberal Studies Committee should consider including both faculty teaching courses in the component being assessed as well as faculty not involved in delivering courses for the component. This may help the Committee better understand and address misconceptions regarding what occurs in these courses as well as expectations for the students.

Are students learning what we want them to?

Liberal Studies Assessment Rubrics used in this assessment (see Appendix A) were developed in the 2014-2015 academic year and were very valuable in assessing the level of achievement of the Liberal Studies Outcomes our students have attained by the time they are in English 202. Through the process of scoring student artifacts, some samples were more challenging to assess, and the Assessment Team has recommendations to strengthen this process. For example, assessment team members had difficulty assessing whether students had adapted modes of communication to an appropriate audience (part of Student Learning Outcome 3b). While some papers included identification of the target audience, others did not, and at the time it was difficult to assess this aspect of the outcome effectively. Without knowing the assignment instructions, it is also difficult for the reviewer to determine if the student failed to demonstrate the desired learning outcome that warrants the lowest possible score, or if the artifact was accidentally misclassified and assigned the wrong learning outcome. In the case of the latter, the artifact would be removed from consideration rather than rated with the lowest score.

When rating a paper in terms of the Student Learning Outcome 3b rubric, at least one reviewer found difficulty in categorizing a paper as “Developing” or “Achieving.” The rubric does not allow for the case

in which a student demonstrates inability with one or two of the skills yet communicated effectively to an appropriate audience, a mixing of criteria for the “Developing” and “Achieving” levels of attainment. Similarly, when assessing a student’s ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information (Student Learning Outcome 1), the Assessment Team believed this included the degree to which the student includes appropriate references to background or research material, yet the rubric for this outcome did not address this aspect of these skills.

As the Liberal Studies Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) typically involve several skill sets being used to reach one objective, the Assessment Team believes that the rubrics should be expanded to recognize multiple sub-skills, or dimensions, associated with the outcome. Artifacts could then be assessed on multiple levels of attainment, reflecting these dimensions or sub-skills, rather than assigning a single value to assess a higher-order outcome.

In terms of reliability and representativeness of the assessment findings, the Assessment Team believes reviewing a larger number of samples is warranted. Each team member expected to review a larger number of artifacts and believes such an expectation is reasonable. The size of the sample should reflect the desired margin of error. Perhaps the sample size should statistically reflect 90-95% of the population. For example, if 1000 students are currently in English 202, then a 95% confidence level with a 5% margin of error would require a sample size of approximately 278 randomly selected papers. In addition to increasing the number of samples, a reasonable percentage of the artifacts should be scored by two or more raters, allowing for a measure of an inter-rater reliability. Even with a norming process similar to the one adopted for this assessment, being able to describe and report reliability associated with the assessment will add value to the process.

Increasing the sample size may necessitate an increase in the number of assessors with diversity of assessor paramount. Though a larger set of faculty would assess the artifacts, a smaller subset of this group could be responsible for the full assessment and assessment report. The Assessment Team believes through their participation the assessors learn more about the Liberal Studies Program, assessment, and current Liberal Studies practices. Thus increasing the number of individuals participating in the assessment will may possibly help more faculty understand and appreciate the Liberal Studies Program and its assessment.

Recommendations:

- **Provide the assignment instructions along with each artifact.**
- **Add more dimensions to the Liberal Studies Assessment Rubrics.** The Assessment Team recommends revising not only the rubrics for SLO 1 and 3b assessed in C1 category, but determining if more dimensions or sub-skills could be highlighted for each of the seven SLOs. Not only would this aid the reviewers, but it should help to provide more depth to the review findings as well.
- **Increase number of artifacts sampled and the number of faculty rating the artifacts.**
- **Include inter-rater reliability measures in the assessment.**

What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?

At the moment, the Assessment Team has no recommendations regarding the Liberal Studies Assessment itself that will strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well our students learn.

How can we improve Liberal Studies Assessment Process, in general?

The recommendations made in this section are based on in-depth assessment committee discussions about balancing objectivity (non-biased assessment) and providing thorough evaluations. For example, although some reviewers believed that knowing the grade assigned to each writing sample and the year classification of the student authors might be insightful, it was unanimously decided that this information could unfairly bias our individual assessment. However, the committee also unanimously decided that more relevant information and practices should be included in the assessment process.

The initial amount of time allotted for assessment of artifacts (approximately 2 weeks and partially over final exam week) was far too short. As a result, the assessment window continued into Summer 2015 and this report was not finalized until September 2015. For assessment teams reviewing artifacts in a fall semester, the ability to extend the review period for several months is not an option. It is recommended that the artifacts for assessment should be available by the beginning of the third month following data collection and the assessors should have at least a month to review the material.

Although not required in the assessment process or by the Liberal Studies Assessment Team Charge, this team conducted a normalization process once student artifacts were available. The Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness (OIPE) selected a small sample of artifacts from the same learning outcome and provided the team with access to these samples. The norming process involved each assessor reading the same small set of student writing samples. Each assessor would score each sample based upon the same rubric. Once the artifacts were scored by each assessor, OIPE collected and summarized the ratings. In a follow-up meeting, each artifact was reviewed, the set of scores for the artifact were discussed, and assessors gave their reasoning for the score assigned. Based upon discussion, assessors sometimes adjusted scores. Discussion continued on each artifact until consensus on a score was reached, or scores assigned differed by no more than one (from a scale of 1 to 4). The norming process was fruitful in providing consistent scoring among the diverse assessors. The Assessment Team unanimously believes that the normalization process was extremely helpful and would be valuable in further Liberal Studies Assessment practices.

Recommendations:

- **Provide earlier access to artifacts and more time for scoring.**
- **Require a norming session early in the assessment.** Multiple artifacts for each learning outcome to be assessed should be included.

APPENDIX A: LIBERAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT RUBRICS USED IN THIS ASSESSMENT

Liberal Studies Rubrics: Liberal Studies Outcomes Rubrics for assessing the level at which students achieve the Liberal Studies outcomes have been developed on the basis of the Liberal Studies Outcomes. Because of the multiple factors that appear in some of the outcomes, they have been divided when necessary into separate rubrics in order to create rational and useful means for assessing student work; see the Liberal Studies Assessment Rubrics Document.

1				
Demonstrate the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information				
No Score	Emerging	Developing	Achieving	Exemplary
A score of X designates irrelevancy of the category to the assignment, or folders and/or content cannot be viewed or assessed.	Student demonstrates some level of deficiency in most if not all of the skills, lacking the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information adequately.	Student demonstrates some ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and/or evaluate information adequately, but is deficient in one or two of the skills required.	Student demonstrates the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information adequately.	Student demonstrates refined skill in locating, analyzing, synthesizing and evaluating information in clear, thoughtful, and precise ways that exceed expectations.
X	1	2	3	4

3b				
Demonstrate the ability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively as well as to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience				
No Score	Emerging	Developing	Achieving	Exemplary
A score of X designates irrelevancy of the category to the assignment, or folders and/or content cannot be viewed or assessed.	Student demonstrates inability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively and, therefore, does not communicate effectively to an appropriate audience.	Student demonstrates some ability to write clearly, coherently, and/or effectively, but inability on one or two of the skills causes the student not to communicate effectively to an appropriate audience.	Student demonstrates the ability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively and, therefore, communicates effectively to an appropriate audience.	Student demonstrates a refined ability to write clearly, coherently, and effectively and, therefore, communicates effectively to a particularly appropriate audience in thoughtful and precise ways that exceed expectations.
X	1	2	3	4

APPENDIX B: CORE DESCRIPTION AND WRITING, RHETORIC, AND CRITICAL STUDIES LEARNING OUTCOMES FROM SYLLABI

Liberal Studies Core Description: This course partially satisfies the Liberal Studies Program's C1 Core requirement, which consists of two sequential writing courses (English 101 and 202). These courses introduce you to college-level writing via the best practices of composition instruction available. These practices undergo constant assessment and improvement. This course sequence addresses immediately an essential academic skill, that of communicating ideas in written form. As in all of the Liberal Studies Core offerings, this course will provide you with academic skills and intellectual habits you will need throughout your undergraduate experience.

Writing, Rhetoric, and Critical Studies (WRCS) Program Learning Outcomes:

ENGL 101 Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course students should be able to:

- Identify and employ all stages of the writing process (to include, but not be limited to, invention, drafting, revising, and editing) both individually and collaboratively.
- Identify differences within and between varying discourse communities and demonstrate clear purpose and attention to the needs and expectations of designated audiences.
- Individually and collaboratively address and solve complex problems by utilizing appropriate research (scholarly and non-scholarly) processes to locate sources.
- Exhibit clear, sound reasoning in the analysis and synthesis of information.
- Exhibit an understanding of fundamental rhetorical principles and the relationship between rhetoric and diversity, public policy, personal experience, and responsible citizenship.
- Recognize the opportunities and liabilities presented by technology and apply this knowledge in achieving all of the above.

ENGL 202 Learning Outcomes:

Upon successful completion of this course students should be able to:

- Demonstrate a deeper understanding of, and comfort with, all stages of the writing process, internalizing these processes and executing all stages in a self-directed manner when preparing polished writing.
- Apply knowledge of rhetoric and rhetorical principles toward both interpretive and writing tasks, accounting for authorship, audience, and context as a matter of course, as well as more nuanced rhetorical considerations.
- Master conventions of academic writing, to include fundamental research practices, citation methods, and differentiating between credible and unreliable sources. Similarly, develop expertise in

the different writing demands of different academic disciplines, learning to move between different sets of basic conventions and expectations.

- Use both rhetorical principles and the activity of writing to explore and better understand previously unfamiliar communities, ideas, and ways of thinking.
- Demonstrate the ability to read and write with a broad variety of texts and technologies, gaining an expansive and adaptable notion of what constitutes “reading” and “writing” within our rapidly evolving technological and media landscape.
- Recognize the ethical considerations and obligations involved when we interpret and generate texts, and develop personal strategies for interpreting and writing in an ethical manner.

APPENDIX C: CLA ASSESSMENT RESULTS

2007-2008 CLA Results

Western Carolina University contributes more to the learning gains made by students than 56 percent of the 176 four-year undergraduate institutions participating in the 2007–2008 CLA. Western Carolina University performed At Expected.

	Freshmen		Seniors		Value-Added Estimate	
	<i>Percentile Rank</i>	<i>Performance Level</i>	<i>Percentile Rank</i>	<i>Performance Level</i>	<i>Percentile Rank</i>	<i>Performance Level</i>
<i>Total CLA Score</i>	44	At	53	At	56	At
<i>Performance Task</i>	30	At	66	At	88	Above
<i>Analytic Writing Task</i>	66	At	30	At	19	Below
<i>Make-an-Argument</i>	62	At	25	Below	17	Below
<i>Critique-an-Argument</i>	67	At	43	At	30	At

2011-2012 CLA Results

3.9 Freshmen: Summary Subscore Statistics

		Analytic Reasoning and Evaluation		Writing Effectiveness		Writing Mechanics		Problem Solving	
		Your School	All Schools	Your School	All Schools	Your School	All Schools	Your School	All Schools
Performance Task	Mean	3.0	2.9	3.0	2.9	3.3	3.2	2.8	2.7
	Standard Deviation	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8	0.8
Make-an-Argument	Mean	3.4	3.2	3.4	3.2	3.6	3.4		
	Standard Deviation	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.8		
Critique-an-Argument	Mean	2.7	2.8	2.9	2.8	3.4	3.4		
	Standard Deviation	1.0	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.8		

3.7 Seniors: Summary Subscore Statistics

		Analytic Reasoning and Evaluation		Writing Effectiveness		Writing Mechanics		Problem Solving	
		Your School	All Schools	Your School	All Schools	Your School	All Schools	Your School	All Schools
Performance Task	Mean	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.7	3.5	3.3
	Standard Deviation	0.9	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.9
Make-an-Argument	Mean	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.7	3.8	3.8		
	Standard Deviation	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.9	0.7	0.7		
Critique-an-Argument	Mean	3.7	3.4	3.8	3.5	4.0	3.9		
	Standard Deviation	0.8	0.9	0.8	0.9	0.7	0.7		

APPENDIX D: SUGGESTED CHANGES TO LIBERAL STUDIES PROGRAM DOCUMENT

- **Section III: Learning Goals of the Program**
 - Update the first paragraph of this section to reflect the revised WCU Mission Statement as well as WCU's Core Values and Guiding Principles (see <http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-chancellor/wcu-2020-plan/wcu-mission-statement.asp>).
 - As the revised Mission Statement does not directly reflect educational attainment goals, it may also be beneficial to reference WCU's Intentional Learning Plan (our previous Quality Enhancement Plan, <http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/ugstudies/intentional-learning-plan/>)
- **Section VI: The Core**
 - Update the Writing description as indicated in Section V. b. of this report. Indicate this is a two-year sequence (not one-year).
- **Section VIII: The Administrative Component**
 - Update the section and title "Assistant Vice Chancellor for Undergraduate Studies" to "Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies" where needed.
 - Update the section and title "The Liberal Studies Oversight Committee" to reflect the name (Liberal Studies Committee," apportionment, and structure of the Liberal Studies Committee as specified in Article II Section 10.2 of the Faculty Constitution of Western Carolina University.
 - Note: the Liberal Studies Program document indicates inclusion of a student representative from the Student Government Associate (or designee) in the membership of the Liberal Studies Committee. This is not included in the current structure of the committee, but if the Committee deems this valuable, it should take this request to the Rules Committee of the Faculty Senate.
 - Review the "Incentives and Rewards System" of the document with respect to current practices, and update as needed.
 - Update "Criteria and Procedure for Approval as a Liberal Studies Course" to reflect current practices with Curriculog.
 - Review and revise "The Assessment of the Program" section to reflect intended and future assessment practices. The Assessment Team echoes its recommendation for inclusion of focus-group interviews in the assessment. The Liberal Studies Program document also indicates that in addition to **assessing components of the program based on themes** to be examined in a single assessment cycle, a second assessment focus will be on the **performance outcomes of students who have successfully completed the First-Year Core and the Perspectives components of the Liberal Studies Program**. These assessment activities are to be conducted for selected courses each semester.

APPENDIX E: SUGGESTED CHANGES TO LIBERAL STUDIES ASSESSMENT TEAM CHARGE

Two versions of the Liberal Studies Assessment Team Charge (effective January, 2015) were shared with the Assessment Team over the courses of this assessment, and the Team was instructed to use the version of the charge posted at the bottom of the Liberal Studies Resources for Faculty website (<http://www.wcu.edu/about-wcu/leadership/office-of-the-provost/ugstudies/liberal-studies-program/liberal-studies-resources-for-faculty/index.asp>). The suggestions for changes provided here are intended for the version at this location on September 13, 2015. A track-changes version of this documents, which includes comments, has been submitted along with this report.

- **Introductory paragraph of charge:**
 - The Assessment Team recommends inclusion of two kinds of focus-group interviews, one with randomly selected students, and another with randomly selected faculty.
 - Include a reference to a link for broader university assessments (interpreted as the NSSE and CLA)
- **List of deliverables from the Task Force:**
 - Remove the reference to learning outcomes for the category in part 2, and replace with an appropriate reference to selected Liberal Studies Program learning outcomes.
 - Clarify the meaning of “broader university-level assessments” in part 5.
 - Recommend moving the reference to Goal 1.2 and Initiative 1.2.4 from part 6 to part 5, and indicating that assessment should include how this category enhances the LS Program’s ability, **in part**, to achieve Goal 1.2 and Initiative 1.2.4. (The Assessment Team had difficulty with this charge, as a single category is not intended to address all aspects of Goal 1.2, and the information provided to the Assessment Team was not sufficient to assess Initiative 1.2.4, to ensure **all academic programs** incorporate the core abilities detailed in Goal 1.2.)
 - Rather than framing recommendations based on Goal 1.2, it may be beneficial to frame recommendations in terms of the Guiding Principles for the Assessment (listed on the second page of the Liberal Studies Assessment Team Charge document).
- **Paragraph following list of deliverables:**
 - This paragraph would benefit from being divided into shorter, simpler sentences, to aid with understanding. Perhaps return to the Guiding Principles of Assessment again.
- **Description Following Student Work:**
 - The Assessment Team recommends increasing the size of the random sample to assure the desired level of confidence in the representativeness of the sample.
 - The Assessment Team recommends the assignment statement be included with each sample of student work.
 - The Assessment Team recommends a mandatory norming session for assessors.
- **Liberal Studies Assessment Rubrics**
 - The Assessment Team recommends adding sub-skills or additional dimensions to each of the Liberal Studies rubrics.