

P3 Assessment Report

Liberal Studies Committee
Western Carolina University

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AUTHORS:

JENNIFER SCHIFF

AUBREY RAY

ALEXANDER MACAULAY

GEORGIA HAMBRECHT

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1. Overview of the Charge to the Assessment Team

The Liberal Studies Assessment team charge specifies that committee 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) review the syllabi of the courses taught in the category under review. More broadly, the assessment process asks committee members to determine student achievement toward the relevant Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes, to evaluate how congruent the goals of the Liberal Studies Program are with what faculty and departments are providing, and to make recommendations concerning the future of the P3 category, the Liberal Studies program in general, and the overall assessment process.

Three fundamental questions guide the Liberal Studies assessment process, and they are:

- 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?

Ultimately, the P3 team's analysis is based upon these guiding principles and questions.

2. Review of Student Work – Quantitative Raw Data

A total of 52 artifacts (student papers) were used in this assessment. Based upon a randomly generated set of student identification (920-) numbers, papers were collected in the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 semesters, and the papers were stored in the H-drive for use in the assessment of the P3 (History) category of the Liberal Studies Program. Each reviewer was assigned to score 13 papers based on the Liberal Studies Assessment Rubrics (see Appendix B). All of these papers were examples of student work from a variety of classes within the P3 category, including:

HIST 141 –Turning Points in US History (multiple sections)

MATH 301 – History of the Scientific Revolution

PAR 146 – Western Religious Traditions

PAR 250 – Origins of Early Christian Traditions

PAR 365 – Medieval and Reformation Thought – Faith, Doubt, and Reason

PAR 366 – Religion and Science: God's Law and Laws of Nature

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Prior to collection, most of the faculty identified the Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes that were best reflected within each assignment. At least one faculty member, however, failed to identify the relevant outcomes during the survey period, which meant that the artifacts from those courses were compared against ALL 44 possible learning outcomes. In terms of assessment, this proved an untenable approach, as some committee members attempted to score independently against each outcome, while others ignored those artifacts entirely. Thus, in many cases, it was left to committee members to determine whether a particular learning outcome was relevant for a given artifact, which led to a great deal of inconsistency in terms of approach. In an attempt to mitigate this discrepancy, this report excludes from the data any learning outcomes for which over half the committee scored the artifacts irrelevant. With that caveat, the relevant 20 learning outcomes identified by the P3 faculty are located within Table 1 below:

Table 1: P3 Learning Outcomes

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Outcome 1A | Demonstrate the ability to locate information |
| Outcome 1B | Demonstrate the ability to analyze information |
| Outcome 1C | Demonstrate the ability to synthesize information |
| Outcome 1D | Demonstrate the ability to evaluate information |
| Outcome 2B-a | Demonstrate the ability to interpret written data |
| Outcome 2B-b | Demonstrate the ability to use written data |
| Outcome 3A | Demonstrate the ability to read difficult texts with comprehension |
| Outcome 3B-a | Demonstrate the ability to write clearly |
| Outcome 3B-b | Demonstrate the ability to write coherently |
| Outcome 3B-c | Demonstrate the ability to write effectively |
| Outcome 3B-d | Demonstrate the ability to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience |
| Outcome 4 | Demonstrate the ability to critically analyze arguments |
| Outcome 6A-a | Demonstrate an understanding of past human experiences |
| Outcome 6A-b | Demonstrate the ability to relate past human experiences to the present |
| Outcome 6B-a | Demonstrate an understanding of different contemporary cultures |
| Outcome 6B-b | Demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships between different contemporary cultures |
| Outcome 6C | Demonstrate an understanding of issues involving social institutions |
| Outcome 6D-a | Demonstrate an understanding of issues involving interpersonal dynamics |
| Outcome 6D-b | Demonstrate an understanding of issues involving group dynamics |
| Outcome 6F | Demonstrate an understanding of issues involving cultural diversity |

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The 52 artifacts were the only evidence of student work used for this assessment.

Table 2, which was generated from assessment scoring data provided by the Office of Institutional Planning and Effectiveness, indicates the distribution of the ratings assigned to the 52 artifacts scored. A rating of “X” indicates the irrelevancy of the category for that particular artifact, while ratings of 1, 2, 3, and 4 correspond respectively to “Emerging,” “Developing,” “Achieving,” and “Exemplary” levels of ability.

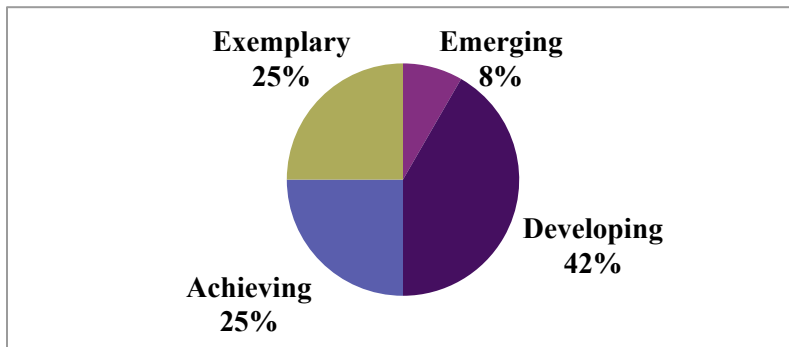
Table 2: Raw Scoring Data

| Outcome | <i>n</i> | X | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | Mean |
|----------------|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-------------|
| 1A | 14 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 2.67 |
| 1B | 14 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2.83 |
| 1C | 14 | 2 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 2.75 |
| 1D | 14 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 2.58 |
| 2B-a | 20 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 3.00 |
| 2B-b | 20 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 3.00 |
| 3A | 11 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3.00 |
| 3B-a | 20 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 8 | 7 | 3.22 |
| 3B-b | 20 | 2 | 0 | 3 | 6 | 9 | 3.33 |
| 3B-c | 20 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 4 | 8 | 3.11 |
| 3B-d | 20 | 5 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 3.47 |
| 4 | 11 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 2.67 |
| 6A-a | 12 | 4 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 2.50 |
| 6A-b | 12 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 2.78 |
| 6B-a | 8 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2.80 |
| 6B-b | 8 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2.67 |
| 6C | 8 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2.40 |
| 6D-a | 8 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2.40 |
| 6D-b | 8 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2.40 |
| 6F | 8 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2.50 |

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3. Review of Student Work - Qualitative Analysis

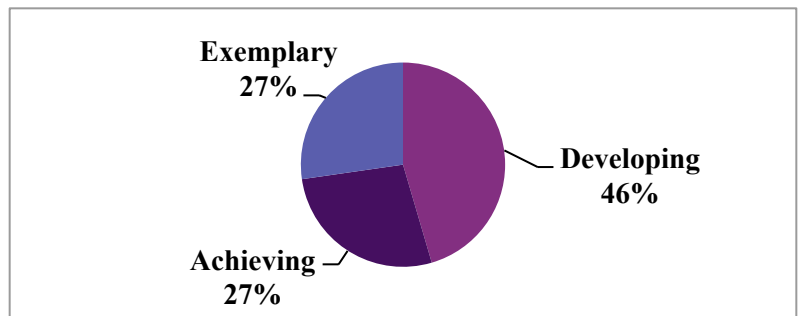
Demonstrate the Ability to Locate Information – Learning Outcome 1A



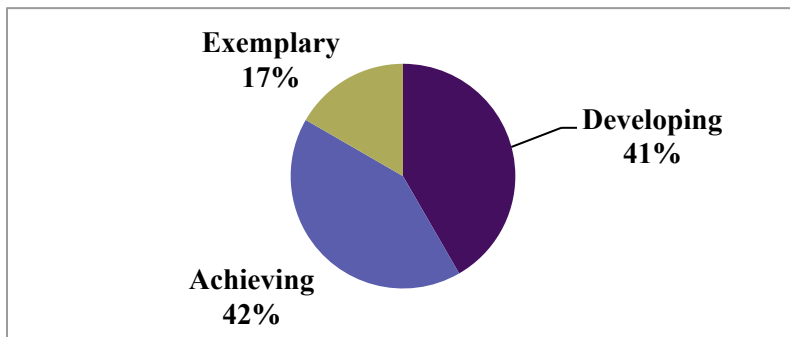
The 12 papers assessed within this category indicate that Western students are performing at all four levels of analysis. Half of students were scored as either Achieving or Exemplary, while only 8% of students were rated as Emerging. Thus, while half of WCU students are demonstrating the ability to locate information, this finding also suggests the need for new approaches to help improve the skill level of those students who scored within the lower half of the metric.

Demonstrate the Ability to Analyze Information – Learning Outcome 1B

Twelve artifacts were included within the 1B category, and the results indicate that over half of students (54%) are performing at the Achieving or Exemplary levels, while no students were classified as emerging. There is still room for improvement, of course, with 46% of students rated as developing, but overall, the data suggests that the majority of Western students are able to analyze information effectively.



Demonstrate the Ability to Synthesize Information – Learning Outcome 1C

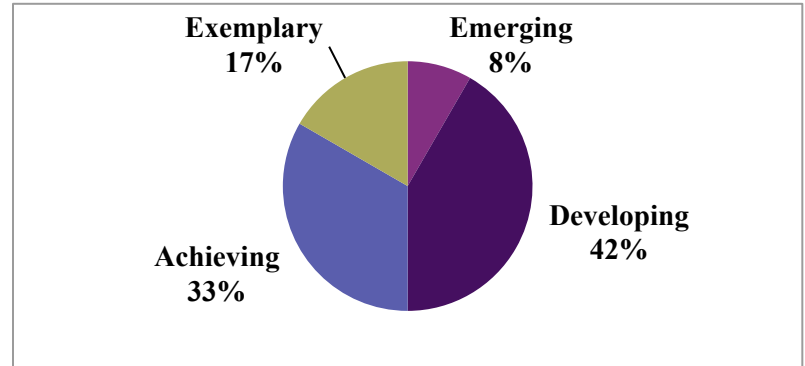


The 12 artifacts scored within this category indicate that WCU students are successfully demonstrating the ability to synthesize information, as 59% of assessed papers were labeled as either Achieving or Exemplary. Again, though, as with Learning Outcome 1B, over 40% of students were rated as still developing their ability in this area.

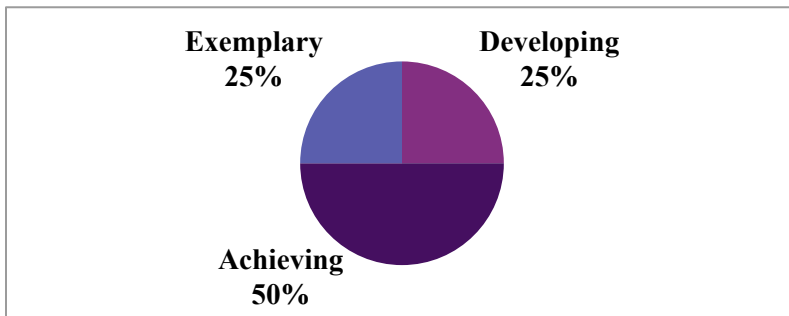
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Demonstrate the Ability to Evaluate Information – Learning Outcome 1D

Out of the 12 artifacts assessed within this category, 50% were rated as Achieving or Exemplary, 42% as Developing, and 8% as Emerging. When compared with the other Outcome 1 sub-categories, the data indicate that students are not as successful at evaluating information. In fairness, the committee would like to note that the assessment of the Learning Outcome 1 category was not easy, as a fine line exists between “analyzing,” “synthesizing,” and “evaluating” information. As a result, the nuances between each category were sometimes difficult to measure.



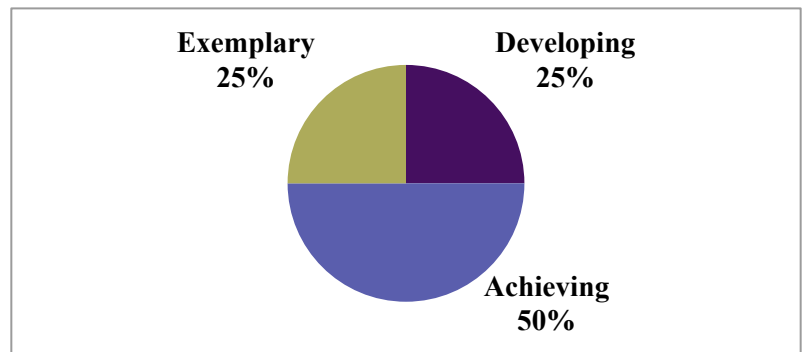
Demonstrate the Ability to Interpret Written Data– Learning Outcome 2B-a



Sixteen artifacts were assessed against Learning Outcome 2B-a, and out of that number, 75% were rated as Achieving or Exemplary. Additionally, none of the assessed artifacts were labeled as Emerging. This finding speaks to the ability of WCU students to interpret written data, and the evidence indicates that a large majority of students are meeting and exceeding the expectations generated by this learning outcome.

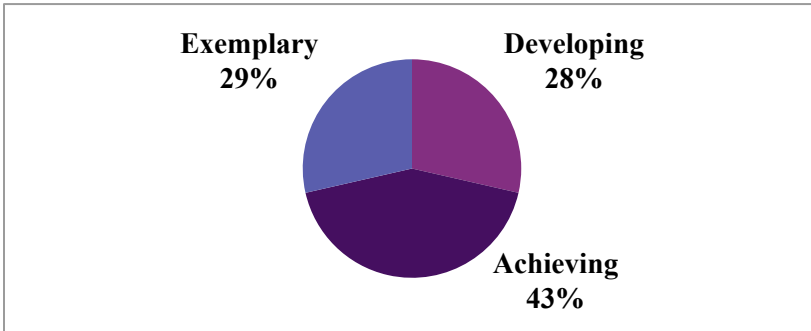
Demonstrate the Ability to Use Written Data– Learning Outcome 2B-b

As indicated by the 16 artifacts scored within this category, student ability to *use* written data is equivalent with their ability to *interpret* it, as the quantitative data for outcomes 2B-a and 2B-b were identical. Indeed, 75% of papers were rated as Achieving or Exemplary, 25% as Developing, and none as Emerging. This finding, in conjunction with the data for outcome 2B-a, suggests that WCU students are meeting and exceeding the goal of interpreting and using written data effectively.



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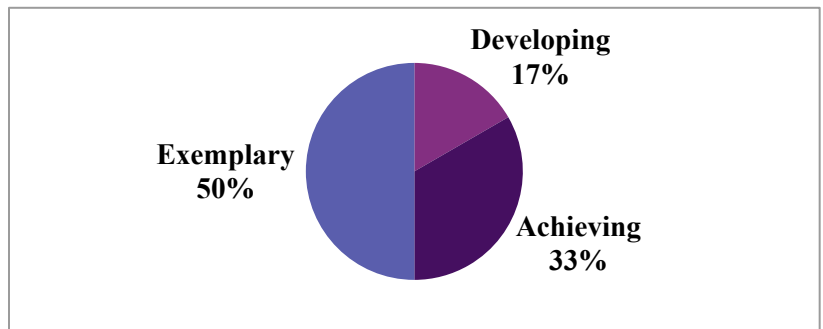
Demonstrate the Ability to Read Difficult Texts with Comprehension – Learning Outcome 3A



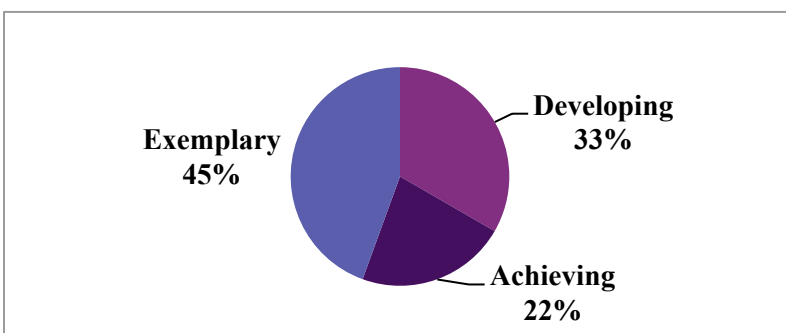
This category included seven artifacts for assessment. Out of that number, 72% were rated as either Achieving or Exemplary, while none were rated as Emerging. The data demonstrate that a large majority of WCU students are able to read difficult texts with comprehension – thus, meeting and exceeding the expectations of outcome 3A.

Demonstrate the Ability to Write Clearly – Learning Outcome 3B-a

Out of 18 artifacts assessed for outcome 3B-a, 83% were rated as either Achieving or Exemplary, with half falling into the latter category. Additionally, none of the artifacts were rated as Emerging. The data in this case indicate that the majority of Western's P3 students are demonstrating the ability to write clearly, and half of them are exceeding university expectations in this area.



Demonstrate the Ability to Write Coherently – Learning Outcome 3B-b

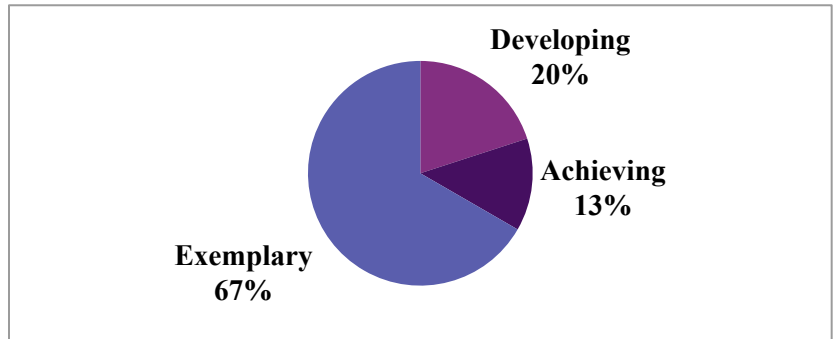


Sixty-seven percent of 18 assessed artifacts in this category were rated as either Achieving or Exemplary, 33% were rated as Developing, and none of the artifacts earned an Emerging score. This finding suggests that a majority of Western students are meeting or exceeding university expectations in terms of coherent writing.

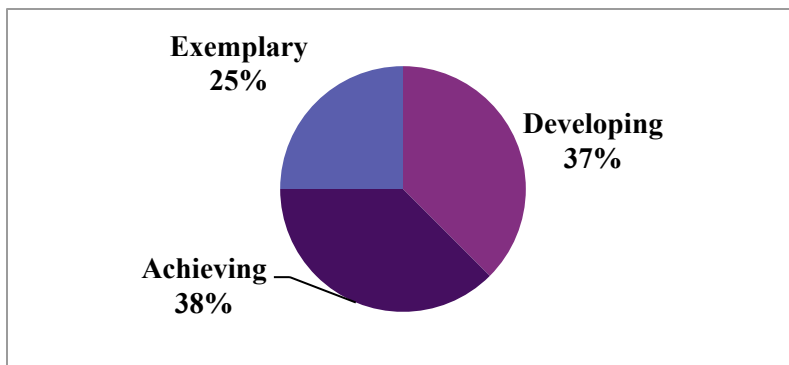
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Demonstrate the Ability to Write Effectively – Learning Outcome 3B-c

Out of 18 artifacts considered within this category, a strong majority (67%) were assessed as Exemplary, suggesting that most WCU students are demonstrating the ability to write effectively. This finding is even more striking when combined with the artifacts scored as Achieving – when those two categories are considered together, the data indicates that 80% of WCU students are meeting or exceeding expectations in this particular outcome category.



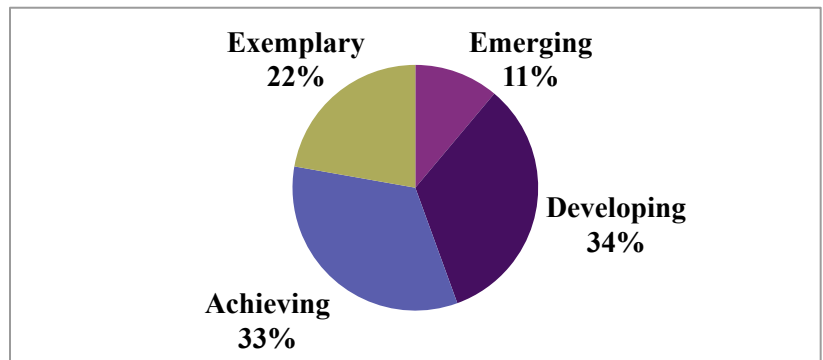
Demonstrate the Ability to Adapt Modes of Communication Appropriate to an Audience – Learning Outcome 3B-d



Within this category, 63% of student work was rated as either Achieving or Exemplary, 37% was rated as Developing, and none of the artifacts were scored as Emerging. The data from these 15 artifacts indicate that Western students demonstrate the ability to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience. When this finding is taken in conjunction with the other related writing outcomes, it appears that the majority of WCU students are excelling within each sub-outcome associated with Learning Outcome 3.

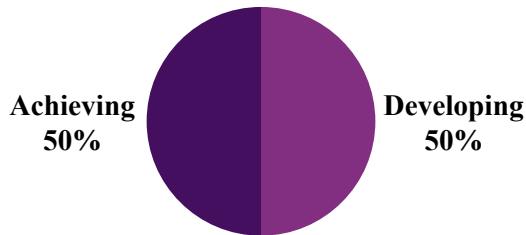
Demonstrate the Ability to Critically Analyze Arguments – Learning Outcome 4

Nine artifacts were assessed against Outcome 4, and out of that number, over half (55%) were rated as Achieving or Exemplary. As a whole, however, the scores in this category fall within all four descriptive levels, with 11% of papers scored as Emerging, and 34% rated as Developing. Thus, while the majority of WCU students are demonstrating the ability to critically analyze arguments in their P3 classes, a sizable percentage of students are still developing their skills in this area.



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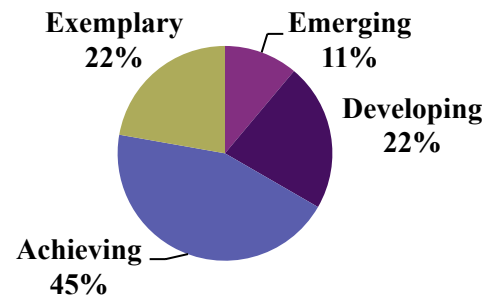
Demonstrate an Understanding of Past Human Experiences – Learning Outcome 6A-a



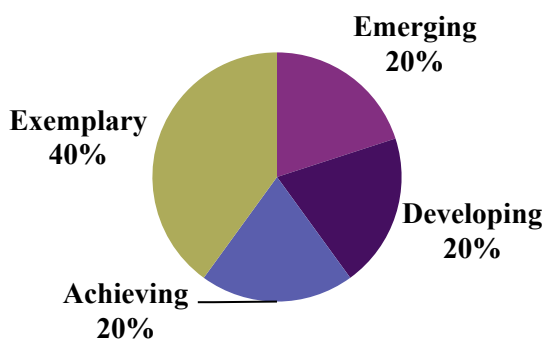
Eight artifacts were assessed in this category, and out of those, half were scored as Achieving and half as Developing. None of the student papers were scored as Exemplary or Emerging. This finding suggests that, although half of WCU students are meeting expectations in the category, there is work still to be done, both in terms of helping Developing and Achieving students advance to the next tier of measurement.

Demonstrate an Ability to Relate Past Human Experiences to the Present – Learning Outcome 6A-b

Nine artifacts were assessed against this learning outcome, and out of those, 67% were scored as Achieving or Exemplary, and 33% were rated as Emerging or Developing. Again, as with outcome 6A-a, the data indicate that although many WCU students are meeting or exceeding expectations in this area, more could be done to help students develop the comparative skills they need to relate past experiences to the present.



Demonstrate an Understanding of Contemporary Cultures – Learning Outcome 6B-a

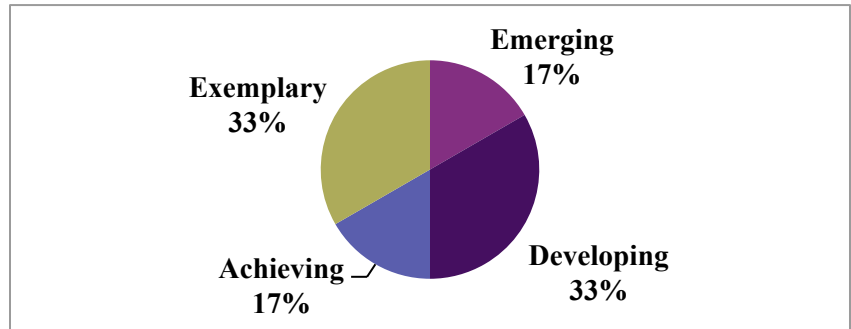


Five artifacts were assessed against Outcome 6B-a, and out of that number 60% were scored as Achieving or Exemplary, while 40% were rated as either Developing or Emerging. This finding indicates that the majority of WCU students are demonstrating a sufficient understanding of contemporary cultures in the modern world. One must note, however, that the sample size within this category is smaller than the other categories assessed within this report.

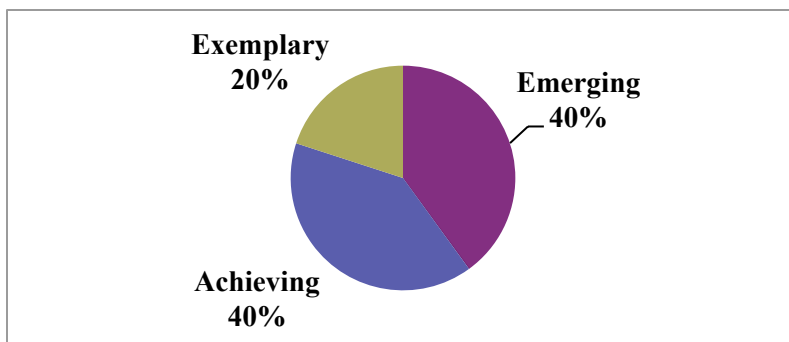
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Demonstrate an Understanding of the Interrelationships between Contemporary Cultures – Learning Outcome 6B-b

Out of the relatively small sample size of six artifacts considered within this category, 50% were designated as Achieving or Exemplary and 50% as Emerging or Developing. The data suggest that while half of Western students are able to understand and appreciate relationships between contemporary cultures, a sizable number of students are still working on expanding their proficiencies in this area.



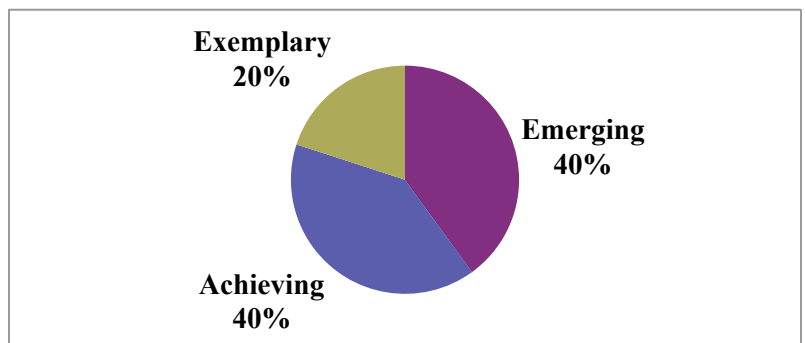
Demonstrate an Understanding of Issues Involving Social Institutions – Learning Outcome 6C



Five artifacts were considered against this particular learning outcome, and out of those five, 60% were rated at the Achieving or Exemplary levels, while 40% were rated as Emerging. The data indicate that the majority of Western's students demonstrate an understanding of issues involving social institutions, but the absence of the Developing score suggests that a disconnect exists between high performing students in this category and those that need additional skill refinement in this outcome area. One should note, however, the small sample size.

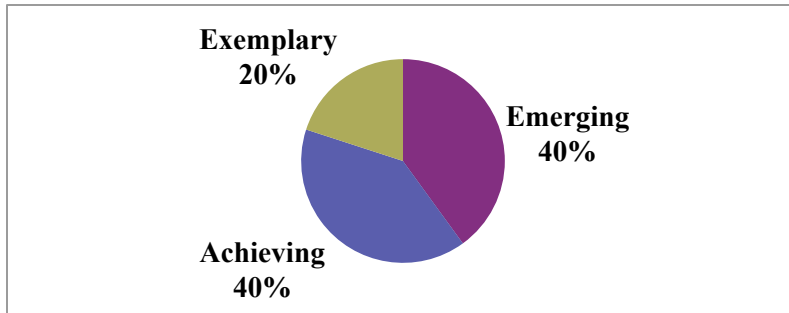
Demonstrate an Understanding of Issues Involving Interpersonal Dynamics – Learning Outcome 6D-a

Within the five papers scored within this particular learning outcome, 60% were rated as Achieving or Exemplary, none as Developing, and 40% as Emerging. These findings suggest that over half of WCU students are able to understand issues involving interpersonal dynamics, but that a definite gap exists between those that meet and exceed expectations in this area and those whose skills are still emerging. There was, again, a small sample size of artifacts for this particular learning outcome.



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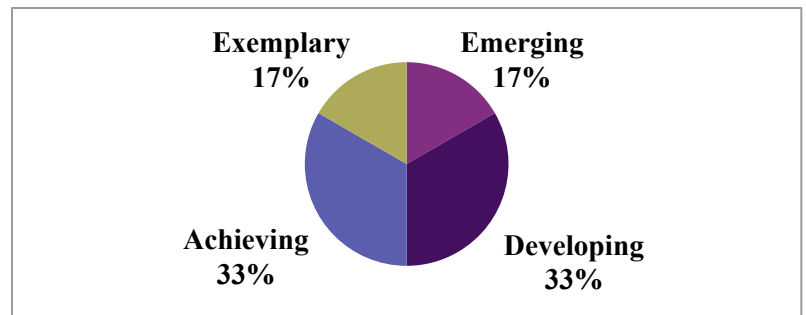
Demonstrate an Understanding of Issues Involving Group Dynamics – Learning Outcome 6D-b



Out of five assessed artifacts, 60% were rated as Achieving or Exemplary, while 40% were scored as Emerging. Again, the lack of any Developing scores indicates that there is a decided gap between those who meet WCU's expectations in this outcome and those who are still building their ability to understand issues involving group dynamics. As with several other learning outcomes related to Outcome 6, the small sample size should be noted.

Demonstrate an Understanding of Issues Involving Cultural Diversity– Learning Outcome 6F

Six artifacts (a relatively small sample) were considered within this category, and out of that number, half were rated as Achieving or Exemplary and half were rated as Developing or Emerging. This data indicate that many WCU students are able to adequately demonstrate an understanding of cultural diversity issues, but opportunity exists for improvement and forward progress in terms of cultural diversity issues.



Overall, the majority (more than 50%) of WCU students enrolled in P3 courses scored either **Achieving** or **Exemplary** ratings in the following learning outcome categories:

- Demonstrate the ability to analyze information
- Demonstrate the ability to synthesize information
- Demonstrate the ability to interpret written data
- Demonstrate the ability to use written data
- Demonstrate the ability to read difficult texts with comprehension
- Demonstrate the ability to write clearly
- Demonstrate the ability to write coherently
- Demonstrate the ability to write effectively
- Demonstrate the ability to adapt modes of communication appropriate to an audience
- Demonstrate an ability critically analyze arguments
- Demonstrate an ability to relate past human experiences to the present

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- Demonstrate an understanding of contemporary cultures
- Demonstrate an understanding of issues involving social institutions
- Demonstrate an understanding of issues involving interpersonal dynamics
- Demonstrate an understanding of issues involving group dynamics

Upon completion of the qualitative assessment of artifact scoring data, the committee stresses the need for each faculty member involved in assessment to choose a few SPECIFIC learning outcomes for each course taught, rather than including all 44 outcomes as a matter of practice.

4. Review of P3 Course Syllabi

The P3 (History) category of the Liberal Studies Program consists of 29 classes housed within three different departments -- History, Math, and Philosophy and Religion. As a part of this assessment, syllabi from six of those classes were included within this review. Those syllabi represent the following classes, offered in either the Fall 2015 or Spring 2016 semesters:

- HIST 141 –Turning Points in US History, Immigration and the Making of the American People**
- MATH 301 – History of the Scientific Revolution**
- PAR 146 – Western Religious Traditions**
- PAR 250 – Origins of Early Christian Traditions**
- PAR 365 – Medieval and Reformation Thought – Faith, Doubt, and Reason**
- PAR 366 – Religion and Science: God’s Law and Laws of Nature**

The assessment team used the syllabi as a guide for determining how well the content of the course reflected the descriptions of the P3 Category and the Liberal Studies Program outcomes, as articulated in the Liberal Studies Document. Each syllabus was checked for a direct statement of P3 fulfillment, as well as for its inclusion of Liberal Studies Learning Outcomes. The results of this review are presented in Table 3 (to the right).

| Course | P3 Description | | Liberal Studies Outcomes | |
|-----------------|----------------|--------|--------------------------|--------|
| | Present | Absent | Present | Absent |
| HIST 141 | | X | X | |
| MATH 301 | X | | | X |
| PAR 146 | | X | X | |
| PAR 250 | X | | | X |
| PAR 365 | | X | | X |
| PAR 366 | X | | | X |
| Totals | 3 | 3 | 2 | 4 |

Table 3: Syllabi

As the data indicate, half of the surveyed classes included a P3 statement, and half did not. Additionally, the majority of syllabi did not include reference to the Liberal Studies learning outcomes, indicating a need for greater oversight and review of syllabi prior to the start of each semester.

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5. Response to 2008 P3 Liberal Studies Assessment

The previous assessment of the P3 Liberal Studies Category was completed in 2008, and the report of those assessment findings can be found on the Liberal Studies Program web site.

The recommendations from the 2008 P3 Assessment Report, the actions taken in response to these recommendations, and the associated outcomes are summarized in Table 4 below (which continues on to the next page).

| 2008 Recommendations | Actions | Outcome |
|--|--|--------------------|
| <p>Instructors of P3 courses should be reminded to include the P3 objectives in their syllabi, if such listing remains a university policy. Committee members did not believe that it was necessary to list the general Liberal Studies goals and the general perspectives goals.</p> | <p>There has been progress on this front, but the committee still finds that many instructors do not include P3 specific language in their syllabi. Additionally, norms have changed over time, and instructors are now encouraged to include in their syllabi the specific Liberal Studies goals that apply to their classes.</p> | <p>In Progress</p> |
| <p>New faculty and non-tenure-track faculty should receive a more thorough orientation to the Liberal Studies Program. The committee derived this recommendation not from the assessment materials but from the informal observation that many new faculty and non-tenure-track faculty are unfamiliar with the history and overall structure of the Liberal Studies Program. Successful liberal arts courses generally live up to the objectives of the Liberal Studies Program, since faculty designed the program to embrace and perpetuate the values of a liberal arts education; however, new and non-tenure-track faculty will still benefit from a general understanding of the program's outlines and development.</p> | <p>The 2016 committee contacted the Coulter Faculty Commons (which ran the new faculty orientation last year in conjunction with the Provost's office) to ask about Liberal Studies inclusion in that program. The CFC indicated that Liberal Studies is NOT a focus of the new faculty orientation. Here is the direct quote: "The Liberal Studies program was briefly mentioned [in the New Faculty Orientation], but very little information about it was provided to faculty. When we cover syllabi, we do mention that liberal studies courses include objectives specific to the liberal studies courses."</p> | <p>No Progress</p> |

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| 2008 Recommendations | Actions | Outcome |
|--|---|--------------------|
| <p>Faculty teaching P3 courses should consider complementing their existing instruction methods with applied teaching techniques, such as service learning. The university's 2007 Quality Enhancement Plan (Intentional Learning) suggests that applied teaching methods will become a more prominent part of life at WCU in coming years. Liberal Studies courses should include those methods when faculty consider them appropriate.</p> | <p>Per each syllabus assessed:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. HIST 141 – The community project assignment has the potential for engagement, but that engagement needs to be further defined within the syllabus. 2. PAR 250 – There are no clearly identified engaged or service learning assignments within the syllabus for this course. 3. MATH 301 – The course assignments are not listed in the syllabus so engagement and service learning in the course cannot be assessed. 4. PAR 146 – The contemporary critical issues project provides an opportunity for engagement. 5. PAR 365 - There are no clearly identified engagement or service learning assignments within the syllabus for this course. 6. PAR 366 – The debating component of an assignment has the potential for engagement, but that engagement needs to be further defined within the document. | <p>In Progress</p> |

Table 4: 2008 Assessment Recommendations

Upon realizing the relatively stagnant progress toward the goals articulated within the 2008 report, the P3 Assessment Committee further endorses the spirit of the earlier recommendations -- that all Liberal Studies faculty include a specific P3 statement within their syllabi, that instructors include a list of the relevant Liberal Studies learning outcomes within their syllabi, that the university include a direct discussion of Liberal Studies within new faculty orientation each year, and that faculty be mindful about highlighting opportunities for service and learning within their Liberal Studies course syllabi. Additionally, an Action Plan must be created to provide a path forward in terms of recommendation implementation.

6. Qualitative Assessment of the P3 Category

Courses in the P3 category play an integral and far ranging role in the Liberal Studies Program. In the process of our review, the committee evaluated assignments based on a wide array of 20 liberal studies learning outcomes (pg. 4, Table 1). Most of the artifacts came from freshmen level courses where scores in the “emerging” or “developing” levels would seem to dominate. However, in only a handful of cases did the number of artifacts ranked as “emerging” and

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“developing” equal the number of artifacts ranked as “achieving” and “exemplary.” In no category did the former outweigh the latter. As noted on page 12 of this report, “the majority (more than 50%) of WCU students enrolled in P3 courses scored either Achieving or Exemplary” in 15 learning outcome categories.

The assessed work proved especially proficient in:

- **demonstrating students’ ability to interpret (2B-a) and use written data (2B-b);**
- **demonstrating the ability to write clearly (3B-a), write coherently (3B-b), and write effectively (3B-c);**
- **adapting modes of communication appropriate to an audience (3B-d).**

Such findings point to the category’s effectiveness in achieving key goals of the Liberal Studies Program, including critical thinking, problem resolution, responsible information use, and most notably, effective communication skills.

The P3 courses also meet the overall purpose of Liberal Studies Perspectives in that they emphasize “important modes of inquiry, discovery, and interpretation through study of the concepts, principles, and theories of the Liberal Arts and Sciences.” The assessed assignments and courses cover a broad range of topics, incorporate different pedagogical approaches, reveal interdisciplinary linkages, encourage self-reflection as well as social awareness, and emphasize diverse human experiences and viewpoints. They map directly onto the primary goals of the Perspectives, particularly:

- **providing students with a broadened world view and knowledge base;**
- **providing experience in the arts, humanities, and social sciences from which connections between disciplines can be revealed;**
- **providing an introduction to the challenges of living in a global society;**
- **creating opportunities for reflection on values, and for discussing differences in values in a critical yet tolerant manner.**

This qualitative assessment was asked to situate the P3 category within broader university goals, specifically GOAL 1.2 and Initiative 1.2.4 of the WCU 2020 Vision. The goal and initiative read as follows:

GOAL 1.2: 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.

Initiative 1.2.4: Ensure that all academic programs incorporate the core abilities detailed in Goal 1.2.

Based on our assessment of the data, classes in the P3 category help students learn to integrate information from a variety of contexts and enable them to deal with complex problems. As mentioned above, classes in this category do an excellent job of preparing students to communicate effectively and responsibly.

To varying degrees, courses in the P3 category touch on issues related to the inspirations for and consequences of various levels of civic engagement. There appears to be a gap between theory and practice, however. When appropriate and

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feasible, this committee recommends that faculty should look to incorporate suitable assignments or projects that require student engagement and action.

As far as Initiative 1.2.4, we were only asked to evaluate one component of the Liberal Studies Program, so it seems inappropriate to address this aspect of our charge. Other assessors have made the same observation (see C1 assessment), so it seems worthwhile to leave this out of the charge to future evaluation teams.

7. Summary of Recommendations

The Liberal Studies Assessment Team for **P3 Perspectives – History** was charged with the task of determining how well the Liberal Studies Program is being delivered by the faculty and learned by the students. After a planning session, the members individually scored a set of student writing artifacts from a range of P3 classes. This set of items was used in the norming session to establish consensus on the terminology (e.g. the difference between evaluate and analyze) and clarify procedures for rubric completion. The remaining student writing artifacts were scored and the data analyzed. Syllabi were reviewed for clarity of their P3, Liberal Studies objectives, and engagement/service learning involvement. Discussions were held to finalize findings and develop recommendations.

The recommendations were analyzed in terms of three primary 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?**

The committee speaks to each of these questions with relevant recommendations, which appear below. Please note that the Question #1 recommendations are divided into two separate emphases, for clarity.

Question #1 (a): Are we delivering what we say we do in terms of the Liberal Studies Document?

The Assessment Team found evidence that assignments clearly reflect the Liberal Studies objectives and 2020 Vision. There were two exceptions to this finding. The first occurred in the university outcomes for LSP that states “Demonstrate an excitement for and love of learning.” While the Team finds this an admirable aspiration, it does not appear to be a reliably measurable occurrence, and thus the Assessment Team recommends this objective be eliminated. The second is in the limited engagement or applied learning opportunities evident in the classes reviewed. Inclusion of assignments that engage or apply learning would strengthen the connection to the 2020 Vision. In addition, redundancy in the Liberal Studies Document and problematic wording in the Liberal Studies Document was noted. The Assessment Team would recommend elimination of the redundant portion of the document to facilitate clarity and reassessment of the problematic wording to more accurately reflect appropriate process.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1. Delete “Demonstrate an excitement for and love of learning” from the Liberal Studies outcomes.”**
- 2. Encourage departments to be mindful as they create and revise liberal studies classes to consider opportunities for community engagement and applied assignments.** While not every class can or should contain an engaged element, each department that offers liberal studies classes should search out appropriate places for connection to the 2020 Vision 1.2.4.
- 3. Delete the following language from the Liberal Studies Document, as the ideas are already included within the broader liberal studies objectives:**
 - “In addition, each Perspectives course will be expected to include emphasis on one or more of the following: critical analysis of arguments, oral communication, service learning, moral reflection, and cultural diversity.”
- 4. Reassess the need or feasibility to monitor writing as stated in the following section of the Liberal Studies Document:**
 - Every Liberal Studies Course will emphasize writing, and its companion proficiency, information use. The Associate Provost for Undergraduate Studies will monitor Perspective courses to see that they provide writing experiences that form a bridge between the first college writing courses and the needs and expectations of the major programs.
- 5. Reassess the necessity of including Initiative 1.2.4 in the Assessment Team charge, as each assessment team is asked to evaluate only one component of the overall Liberal Studies Program.**

Question #1 (b): Are we delivering what we say we do in terms of the P3 Classes and Syllabi?

The rubrics used in student writing assessment were effective in reflecting the range of student learning and allowing for evaluation of the delivery of the Liberal Studies objectives. While the underlying framework was evident, there were several instances where “what we say we do” could be enhanced. These recommendations center on syllabi clarity and include consistent P3 wording, identification of specific objectives to be addressed, and mapping of the objectives onto specific assignments in the syllabi. No standard language in the syllabi was used to reflect the P3 objectives. A standard phrasing included in all P3 syllabi would enhance transparency of delivery. This transparency should include the level of the specific outcome emphasis of a given class. To further enhance this transparency, the Assessment Team felt the Liberal Studies objectives should be mapped onto specific class assignments. This would allow faculty to intentionally plan, deliver, and evaluate their delivery and students to be deliberate in their learning.

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Standardized language included in every P3 syllabi should read as follows:

- This course satisfies the P3 Perspective requirement of the Liberal Studies Program. In it, you will be introduced to a distinct body of knowledge and tools of historical inquiry that shape and define it. In this course emphasis will be placed upon outcomes 1, 3, 4, and 6a (for example).

2. Map outcomes of course onto specific assignments in the syllabus. This mapping would allow each assignment to be connected to the P3 objectives taught and evaluated.

Question #2: Are students learning what we want them to, as reflected in the assessment process?

The answer to this question is unclear with the current data. The potential is clearly there. The team reviewed writing artifacts that represent the full spectrum of student learning. While some artifacts (1/3) were selected to represent weak learning, others were selected to reflect mid (1/3) and strong (1/3) learning. There is no way with the data presently available to the Assessment Team to determine how successful these courses were at facilitating student learning. Additional information needs to be compiled. Surveying students or establishing debriefing sessions of randomly selected students by focusing on their course experiences would supplement the existing artifact assessment as a measure of learning.

Additionally, the P3 Assessment Team had a number of other suggestions to facilitate future assessment efforts so that we can adequately measure whether students are learning what we want them to. These suggestions center on the quality of information provided to the team.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a student survey or debriefing to provide focused information on student perceived learning, in addition to the extant artifact assessment process.

2. Instructors must identify the specific liberal studies objectives when completing the assessment survey rather than submit the entire list of possible objectives. A list of 44 or more objectives to use to assess a single assignment proved untenable for the assessment team.

3. Instructors should submit a copy of the assignment directions along with each set of artifacts. Specific parameters of the assignments would facilitate more accurate Team scoring.

4. Instructors should submit course-specific detailed syllabi rather than a general syllabus shared among several instructors. Sufficient detail for analysis was not available on the more generic submissions.

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Question #3: What can we do to strengthen the correlation between what we deliver and how well students learn?

The syllabi offer the clearest connection between delivery and learning. As already mentioned in Question 1(b), Recommendation #2, syllabi need to specify learning objectives and map these objectives onto the course assignments. This would allow for students to be informed as to the expected learning of each assignment.

In addition to structured syllabi, a suggestion from the 2008 Liberal Studies Report on P3 Course Assessment needs to be revisited, as the team could find no evidence of its implementation. The 2008 Team recommended, “New faculty and non-tenure-track faculty should receive a more thorough orientation to the Liberal Studies Program”. The current Assessment Team endorses this recommendation. Information on the Liberal Studies Program, including syllabi requirements, should be a part of the WCU New Faculty Orientation Program.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The New Faculty Orientation Program should include a brief overview of WCU’s Liberal Studies Program and, as part of that emphasis, provide new faculty with the specific Liberal Studies requirements for syllabi. Turnover within programs makes it critical that an understanding of Liberal Studies and the role of the syllabi in connecting delivery and learning be explored.

2. To improve the relationship between what we deliver and how well students learn, the University should establish an *Action Plan* for progressive implementation of the recommendations contained within this report. Such a plan should specify accountability benchmarks, along with descriptions of the personnel responsible for implementation.

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8. Appendix A: Description of P3 Requirement

This description is taken from the Liberal Studies Program 2.0 Document, approved 27 January 2016.

P3, History (3 hours):

The study of history introduces students to a distinctive body of knowledge and to the tools of historical inquiry that shape and define it. History locates people and events in space and time, explaining change and continuity, and the diversity of forces shaping events, institutions, and value systems. The subject of study should be of sufficient breadth to convey an understanding of development over time and of sufficient depth to illustrate the complexity of forces that mold events.

The study of history should engage students in the experience of interpreting the record of the past and drawing their own conclusions.

9. Appendix B: Sample Learning Outcome Rubric

This rubric (for Learning Outcome 1) provides an example of the scale on which all artifacts were assessed. The descriptions for each category (for no score, emerging, developing, achieving, and exemplary) are representative of each of the 20 relevant P3 learning outcomes.

| Learning Outcome 1 | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| Demonstrate the ability to (a) locate, (b) analyze, (c) synthesize, and (d) 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 |