

General Education Program Assessment Report General Education Committee

INTRODUCTION

The assessment of the General Education Program (GEP) is described in Step 6 of the University Handbook (Chapter 7, Section 2) in the following way:

Assessment within the General Education Program is intended to be a formal process of inquiry into student learning. More than simply an exercise in documenting the level of student achievement within the program, assessment is an exploration of how and why students learn, or fail to learn, within a particular curricular and pedagogical context. It explores both the outcomes that students achieve as well as the processes through which they learn. In this way, assessment should be viewed as an open ended scholarly activity, a collaborative action research project aimed at the improvement of teaching and learning.

The General Education Program Assessment process for Year 1 was structured to honor this reflective and collaborative approach to assessment by asking all Foundation Level instructors teaching First Year Seminar, Written and Oral Communication, Quantitative Literacy and Wellness to submit course portfolios explaining the alignment of their courses to their General Education category learning outcomes, providing assessment results of student learning related to at least one of these learning outcomes, reflecting on the results, and describing a plan for addressing the results to impact and improve student learning. In addition, four Faculty Learning Communities were formed, comprised of 4 – 6 members, for each Foundation Level category, to review all of the course portfolios in their category, furnish rubric feedback to each instructor, and provide summary comments and recommendations to be used by the Assessment Coordinator for the Year 1 Assessment Report for the General Education Committee.

To prepare Foundation Level instructors to successfully submit course portfolios and to prepare the four Foundation Level Faculty Learning Communities members to fulfill their responsibilities, the Associate Vice Chancellor for Teaching, Learning and Academic Programs, the Director of General Education, the Assessment Coordinator, the chair of the General Education Committee and other members of the General Education Committee conducted a series of informational meetings and professional development workshops. The workshops provided Foundation Level instructors with descriptions of the required course portfolio components, examples of course portfolios, and training in the use of ePortfolio, an electronic portfolio submission feature within Desire2Learn. The sessions specifically for Faculty Learning Community members also provided essential information on the required portfolio components and gave them practice in applying the Course Portfolio Rubric to sample course portfolios. All materials and Powerpoint slides shared at the informational meetings and workshops were made available on a campus GEP Assessment webpage for everybody's easy access and consultation.

The report that follows details the assessment process that was implemented as well as a discussion of the results.

OVERVIEW OF ONGOING ASSESSMENT EFFORTS

Effectively implementing all components and phases of the General Education Program Assessment Process required a multi-faceted approach with a primary emphasis on professional development. Not only did instructors need to understand the essential components of the course portfolio, but because the decision was made to have all portfolios submitted electronically, the majority of Foundation Level instructors also had to learn how to submit an ePortfolio in the Desire2Learn platform. Efforts to prepare all participants to successfully complete the General Education Program Assessment process included the following:

- Holding informational sessions for the entire campus community explaining the GEP Assessment process, including the required components of the course portfolio and the purpose and responsibilities of the Faculty Learning Communities
- Developing an electronic course portfolio template for use in Desire2Learn (see [GEP Assessment website](#) for course portfolio example)
- Holding a series of summer workshops on course redesign, aligning course learning outcomes to GEP Learning Outcomes, developing and applying assessment rubrics, and reporting assessment data
- Holding a series of summer and fall workshops to train Foundation Level instructors in how to use the ePortfolio function in Desire2Learn
- Developing a Course Portfolio Rubric for use by the Faculty Learning Communities to provide individual feedback to instructors (see [GEP Assessment website](#) for the Course Portfolio Rubric)
- Monitoring the submission process to make sure course portfolios were submitted by all Foundation Level instructors, responding to questions when instructors experienced difficulties, and following up when course portfolios were not submitted by the February 1st deadline
- Developing a “Faculty Learning Community Summary Report Template” for capturing feedback from the four Faculty Learning Communities on the strengths, challenges and suggestions for improvement to the GEP assessment process (see Appendix A for the FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY Summary Report Template)
- Holding four professional development workshops/meetings for Faculty Learning Community members to explain their responsibilities, provide them with practice in applying the Course Portfolio Assessment Rubric, invite their input for revising the rubric, support them through the process of reviewing and assessing the course portfolios, and finally, to get their feedback on the entire assessment process
- Creating procedures for delinquent course portfolios that included notifications of Department Chairs, Deans, and the Provost (see Appendix B for the “Procedures for Delinquent Course Portfolios)

The table below summarizes the number of portfolios submitted in each Foundation Level category and the total number of students enrolled in the courses, which means the number of students impacted by General Education Program instruction and included in the assessment of student learning.

Table 1: Summary of Course Portfolio Submission Data

	Oral and Written Communication	First Year Seminar	Quantitative Literacy	Wellness
ePortfolios submitted:	12	20	18	4
Students enrolled:	854 (oral) 529 (written)	495	968	671

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM THE REVIEW OF COURSE PORTFOLIOS

The section that follows will summarize the findings for each General Education Foundation Level Category (Written and Oral Communication, First Year Seminar, Quantitative Literacy, and Wellness) including analysis of the actual course portfolios and assessment findings of the instructors, survey data from both course instructors and Faculty Learning Community members, rubric data from the Faculty Learning Communities, individual feedback from the Faculty Learning Community to each instructor, and summary findings and recommendations from each of the four Faculty Learning Communities.

Communication

Written Communication

Eleven course portfolios were submitted for Written Communication including the assessment of student work from English 101, English 150, and English 202, all Foundation Level writing courses that are taken by first- and second-year students. While a common rubric was not used across all of the courses, all but two of the course portfolios included clearly delineated assessment criteria with common elements like a clear and well supported thesis, effective use of evidence from textual material, smooth transitions, logical and organized presentation of ideas, and writing free from grammatical and mechanical errors (see illustrative Written Communication rubric in Appendix A).

While all the instructors were expected to address all of the GEP Written Communication learning outcomes in their courses, each instructor could choose which GEP learning outcome or outcomes to use for guiding the assessment of student work included in the portfolio. Of the eleven Written Communication instructors, nine chose to assess one of the GEP learning outcomes and two chose to assess all three. The table below presents a breakdown of what percentage of instructors assessed each of the GEP Written Communication Category Learning Outcomes:

LO#	Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:	%
LO 1	Identify basic components and elements that shape successful writing such as topic, purpose, genre, and audience	36
LO 2	Compose an articulate, grammatically correct, and organized piece of writing with properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience	50
LO 3	Critique their own and others' writing to provide effective and useful feedback	45

	to improve their communication	
--	--------------------------------	--

Oral Communication

One course portfolio was submitted for Oral Communication including the assessment of student work from 36 sections of Communication 101, which is a Foundation Level oral communication class taken largely by first-year students. A common “general course syllabus” was used by instructors across all sections, and a common rubric, based on the *National Communication Association Standards for Public Speaking*, was used for assessing the students’ oral presentations (see Oral Communication rubric in Appendix C).

While all instructors were expected to address all of the GEP Oral Communication Learning Outcomes in their courses, the Division of Communication could choose which learning outcome or outcomes to use for guiding the assessment of student work included in the portfolio. Since the assessment of student work was coordinated across all 36 sections the learning outcome focus was the same for all instructors:

LO#	Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:	%
LO 1	Identify basic components and elements that shape successful oral presentation such as topic, purpose, genre, composure, and audience	0
LO 2	Compose and deliver an articulate, grammatically correct and organized oral presentation using appropriate communication technologies as well as properly documented and supported ideas, evidence, and information suitable to the topic, purpose, and audience	100
LO 3	Critique their own and others’ speaking to provide effective and useful feedback to improve their communication	0

Feedback from the Communication Faculty Learning Community

The same Faculty Learning Community reviewed all course portfolios for both Oral and Written Communication, completed a Course Portfolio Rubric for each instructor, and uploaded completed rubrics into D2L for each instructor’s viewing. To preserve the anonymity of the instructors involved, the table below combines the summary data from Oral and Written Communication Course Portfolio Rubrics, and the comments that follow are drawn from feedback given to individual instructors as well as comments from the Faculty Learning Community Summary Report.

Table 2: Summary of Course Portfolio Rubric Data from Written and Oral Communication Faculty Learning Community

Written and Oral Communication		Meets Expectations	Developing	Does Not Meet Expectations	No Level Selected	Optional Element Not Included
1	Course Syllabus	100	0	0	0	0
2	Explanation of Alignment	70	10	20	0	0
3	Outcomes Measured	80	0	10	10	0
4	Description of Activities Assessed	90	10	0	0	0
5	Rubric (Optional)	60	10	0	0	30
6	Description of the Criteria	80	20	0	0	0
7	Summarize Assessment Results	60	40	0	0	0
8	Charts, Graphs, and/or Tables (Optional)	60	0	0	0	40
9	Results from Other Feedback Mechanisms (Optional)	10	20	0	30	40
10	Samples of Student Work	90	10	0	0	0
11	Plans for Improvement	80	10	10	0	0

As the chart above illustrates, the majority of Oral and Written Communication instructors successfully completed all required components of the course portfolio and received positive feedback from the Faculty Learning community. Suggestions for improvement mainly focused on “Explanation for Alignment,” where the FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY felt the alignment between GEP and course learning outcomes needed to be made more explicit and recommended that the GEP Learning Outcomes and explanation of alignment be included in the course syllabus; and “Summarize Assessment Results” where feedback indicated that “many [instructors] were unable to quantify results” and that the results were not always sufficiently explained. The Faculty Learning Community also commented that in the few cases where a rubric or clear assessment criteria were not provided, it was difficult to follow both the instructor’s assessment process and their results.

Assessment Results and Future Plans for Written and Oral Communication Instructors

As mentioned previously, all Oral Communication instructors applied the same rubric to student work and results were already aggregated across the 36 sections of Oral Communication classes in the course portfolio submitted. On the student presentation that all Oral Communication instructors required and assessed, the average score across 793 students was 87%, which was somewhat skewed by a few students scoring a zero (a zero score typically represents students who miss their scheduled presentation day). While 87% indicates solid student performance, the mode score for the same assessment was 92% indicating even stronger performance across students in Oral Communication.

In the Written Communication category, there was a great deal of agreement across instructors on what criteria are critical for demonstrating proficient written communication. However, in

this set of course portfolios, the use of a common rubric for the assessment of student work was not a requirement and a common format was not used for reporting assessment results. Therefore, assessment results for Written Communication cannot be cleanly aggregated. In the absence of a common assessment tool, the results of each instructor’s assessment data were examined by the Assessment Coordinator to determine what was revealed about student learning. From the grades and ratings given by instructors, it is clear from their point of view that the vast majority of students in written communication are meeting or exceeding expectations for learning related to the GEP Communication Learning Outcomes selected. The majority of students fell into the top two categories where an assessment rubric was used by the instructor, received A’s and B’s when grades were given, and scored in the A/B range if a course average was provided. While a common rubric was not used, because there was a great deal of agreement across instructors on what criteria are critical for demonstrating proficient written communication the development of a common rubric seems a logical next step.

In reflecting on the assessment results, Written and Oral Communication instructors had a variety of ideas for how to improve/further support student learning in their courses. The table below indicates where the focus of the proposed measures/changes fell:

Focus of Change	%
Curriculum (What is taught)	0
Instruction (How it is taught)	50
Assessment (How student work is assessed)	50

Some examples of the changes suggested by Written and Oral Communication instructors included increasing in-class time spent working on the assigned project to allow for more instructor feedback, requiring instructor approval for project topic to insure the availability of quality resources, adding more examples of work for students to view and discuss, revising the form used for peer feedback, increasing the use of D2L (online environment) for peer and instructor feedback, providing more explicit explanation of the intended learning outcomes for the assignment, and applying assessment criteria consistently across students and course sections.

First Year Seminar

Twenty course portfolios were submitted in the First Year Seminar category including the assessment of student work from twenty different sections of “special topic” First Year Seminar courses, a new component of the General Education Program taken by first year students. While a common rubric was not used for assessing common learning outcomes across all of the courses, all instructors but a small few included clearly to fairly clearly delineated assessment criteria for the First Year Seminar learning outcomes being assessed. Because of the newness of the First Year Seminar course, and the number of learning outcomes included in this category, the use of a common rubric or even multiple common rubrics would have been difficult to administer in this first round of assessment. While a common rubric was not used across

courses, an example of a First Year Seminar rubric that had clear assessment criteria and was noted by the Faculty Learning Community is included in Appendix C.

While all instructors were expected to address all of the GEP First Year Seminar Learning Outcomes in their courses, each instructor could choose which learning outcome or outcomes to use for guiding the assessment of student work included in the portfolio. Of the twenty First Year Seminar instructors, fourteen chose to assess one learning outcome, one chose to assess two learning outcomes, two chose to assess three learning outcomes, three chose to assess four learning outcomes, and no instructors chose to assess more than four learning outcomes. The table below presents a breakdown of what percentage of instructors assessed each of the First Year Seminar Category Learning Outcomes:

LO#	Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:	%
LO 1	Describe the importance of a liberal education and the ways in which academic study is structured at UWSP	35
LO 2	Describe the importance of critical thinking and information literacy and apply the associated skills	45
LO 3	Identify and apply appropriate note-taking, test taking, and time-management strategies to their academic studies	5
LO 4	Describe the importance of co-curricular involvement and how it enhances their academic study at UWSP	20
LO 5	Identify and utilize UWSP programs, resources, and services that will support their academic studies and co-curricular involvement	10
LO 6	Develop a plan that demonstrates their responsibility for their own education, specifically how it relates to their interests, abilities, career choices, and personal development	45

Feedback from the First Year Seminar Faculty Learning Community

The same Faculty Learning Community reviewed all course portfolios for First Year Seminar, completed a Course Portfolio Rubric for each instructor, and uploaded completed rubrics into D2L for the instructor's viewing. The table below presents the summary data from across Course Portfolio Rubrics, and the comments that follow are drawn from feedback given to individual instructors as well as comments from the Faculty Learning Community Summary Report.

Table 3: Summary of Course Portfolio Rubric Data from First Year Seminar Faculty Learning Community

First Year Seminar		Meets Expectations	Developing	Does Not Meet Expectations	No Level Selected	Optional Element Not Included
1	Course Syllabus	100	0	0	0	0

2	Explanation of Alignment	95	5	0	0	0
3	Outcomes Measured	95	5	0	0	0
4	Description of Activities Assessed	89	5	5	1	0
5	Rubric (Optional)	74	0	0	5	21
6	Description of the Criteria	47	47	5	1	0
7	Summarize Assessment Results	26	58	16	0	0
8	Charts, Graphs, and/or Tables (Optional)	47	0	0	0	53
9	Results from Other Feedback Mechanisms (Optional)	42	0	0	0	58
10	Samples of Student Work	89	5	5	1	0
11	Plans for Improvement	42	47	11	0	0

As the chart above illustrates, the majority of First Year Seminar instructors successfully completed the required components of the course portfolio and received positive comments from the Faculty Learning Community. Suggestions for improvement mainly focused on three areas. The first area was “Description of Criteria,” where illustrative comments included “hard to see how the [criteria] relate to student performance [of learning outcome],” “hard to distinguish between levels of achievement,” and “Instructors frequently provided rubrics that did not measure learning outcomes, but instead [provided] grading criteria...[which] led to a disconnect between student’s grades and effective assessment of their achievement of specific outcomes.”

A second area where the Faculty Learning Community noted some difficulties was in “Summarize Assessment Results” where feedback indicated that when instructors provided tables with assessment results and a “relevant narrative” the results were easy to follow, but that “many [instructors] were unable to quantify results” and lacked sufficient explanation to “provide detailed insight on attainment levels.” The most frequent suggestions made by the FACULTY LEARNING COMMUNITY to instructors were about clarifying “rubric categories” and “performance levels,” and explaining how the rubric/grading results were connected to the First Year Seminar Learning Outcomes.

The last component of the First Year Seminar course portfolios to which the Faculty Learning Community called attention was in “Plans for Improvement” where comments included that “Instructors were insightful about their teaching strategies, assignments and overall course improvements,” [but] “we could not always identify how the assessment data led to those insightful plans for improvement.” Some version of this same comment appeared on a number of the First Year Seminar course portfolios: a compliment was given about the thoughtfulness of future plans, followed by a question about how the plans relate to the actual assessment results.

Assessment Results and Future Plans for First Year Seminar Instructors

Assessment results for First Year Seminar were especially difficult to aggregate because of the number of learning outcomes included in this category and the fact that common criteria were not required to be used for the assessment of student work nor a common format used for reporting assessment results. In the absence of common criteria or a common assessment tool, the results of each instructor’s assessment data were examined by the Assessment Coordinator to determine what was revealed about student learning. From the grades and ratings given by instructors, it is clear from their point of view that the majority of students in First Year Seminar are meeting or exceeding expectations for learning related to the GEP First Year Seminar Learning Outcomes selected. The majority of students fell into the top two categories when an assessment rubric was used by the instructor; received A’s and B’s when grades were given, and scored in the A/B range if a point score or class average was provided.

While the majority of students in First Year Seminar appear to be meeting or exceeding expectations, in several of the sections, between 10 and 30 percent of the students fell into the lowest and second lowest categories on the assessment results matrix. Descriptors used for the lowest category included “D/F,” “Unacceptable,” “Failing,” “Inadequate,” “Emerging,” and “Beginning.” Descriptors for the second lowest category included “C,” “Unsatisfactory,” “Developing,” “Progressing,” and “Average.” It was unclear from the presentation of the assessment results whether these categories were considered unacceptable in terms of performance and what should be done specifically for students who fall into these categories. This was noted in the portfolio assessment rubric by the Faculty Learning Community when it occurred, and generally was followed by a request for clarifying information.

In reflecting on the assessment results, First Year Seminar instructors had a variety of ideas for how to improve/support student learning in their courses. The table below indicates where the focus of the proposed measures/changes fell:

Focus of Change	%
Curriculum (What is taught)	24
Instruction (How it is taught)	52
Assessment (How student work is assessed)	24

Some examples of the changes suggested by First Year Seminar instructors to address perceived needs/issues included increasing the class time spent on the knowledge and skills deemed most important to learn and targeted in course assessments; addressing critical content and skills earlier in the semester; cutting course content to allow more time for student discussion and reflection; stressing the importance of class attendance; breaking assignments into smaller pieces to provide students with practice and feedback; and revising the assessment rubric to clarify categories of achievement and expectations for student work.

Quantitative Literacy

Eighteen course portfolios were submitted for Quantitative Literacy including the assessment of student work from Communication 201, Math 105,109,111,120, 118, 228,355, Physics 100, and Psychology 300, all of which are foundational quantitative literacy courses taken by first and second year students. While a common rubric was not used across all of the courses, all but a few of the course portfolios included clearly delineated assessment criteria primarily related to quantitative knowledge and skills like identifying the problem, selecting appropriate solution strategies, computation, and correctness and justification of the solution. (See Appendix D for a representative sample of a quantitative literacy rubric.)

While all instructors were expected to address all of the GEP Quantitative Literacy Learning Outcomes in their courses, each instructor could choose which learning outcome or outcomes to use for guiding the assessment of student work included in the portfolio. Of the seventeen instructors (one instructor submitted a course portfolio for two different courses), nine chose to assess one learning outcome, five chose to assess two learning outcomes, and three chose to assess all three learning outcomes. The table below presents a breakdown of what percentage of instructors assessed each of the GEP Quantitative Literacy Category Learning Outcomes:

LO#	Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:	%
LO 1	Select, analyze, and interpret appropriate numerical data used in everyday life in numerical and graphical format	35
LO 2	Identify and apply appropriate strategies of quantitative problem solving in theoretical and practical applications	71
LO 3	Construct a conclusion using quantitative justification	58

The same Faculty Learning Community reviewed all course portfolios for Quantitative Literacy, completed a Course Portfolio Rubric for each instructor, and uploaded completed rubrics into D2L for the instructor's viewing. The table below presents the summary data from across Course Portfolio Rubrics, and the comments that follow are drawn from feedback given to individual instructors as well as comments from the Faculty Learning Community Summary Report.

Table 4: Summary of Course Portfolio Rubric Data from Quantitative Literacy Faculty Learning Community

	Meets Expectations	Developing	Does Not Meet Expectations	No Level Selected	Optional Element Not Included
Quantitative Literacy					

1	Course Syllabus	100	0	0	0	0
2	Explanation of Alignment	63	38	0	0	0
3	Outcomes Measured	94	6	0	0	0
4	Description of Activities Assessed	94	6	0	0	0
5	Rubric (Optional)	81	0	0	6	13
6	Description of the Criteria	75	25	0	0	0
7	Summarize Assessment Results	94	0	6	0	0
8	Charts, Graphs, and/or Tables (Optional)	87	0	0	0	13
9	Results from Other Feedback Mechanisms (Optional)	19	0	0	37	44
10	Samples of Student Work	94	6	0	0	0
11	Plans for Improvement	75	19	6	0	0

As the table above illustrates, the majority of Quantitative Literacy instructors successfully completed all required components of the course portfolio and received positive comments from the Faculty Learning Community. Suggestions for improvement mainly focused on three areas. The first was “Explanation of Alignment,” where the main focus of comments was to encourage instructors to include the GEP Quantitative Literacy Learning Outcomes and an explanation of alignment in their course syllabus because they believed “students in these courses needed clearer communication of this alignment.”

The second portfolio component that elicited a number of comments from the Faculty Learning Community was in “Description of Criteria,” where it was noted that many instructors provided very clear rubrics/assessment criteria, but in the case of others, “it was not clear how the assessment is linked to the QL learning outcome.” One comment specifically mentioned that the terms used on the rubric for problem solving were different from the terms included in the Quantitative Literacy Learning Outcome being assessed even though both were focused on the same skills. There was also some concern expressed by the Faculty Learning Community about the match between problems or exam questions being assessed and the Quantitative Literacy Learning Outcome identified as the focus of instruction and assessment.

The last area of the Quantitative Literacy portfolios that drew attention from the Faculty Learning Community was in “Plans for Improvement” where there were a number of very complimentary comments about the instructors’ responses to the assessment results. The Faculty Learning Community expressed support for plans of the instructors to make changes like increase the class focus on the interpretation of a problem and lessen the focus on computation, rearrange their schedule to address some of the targeted knowledge/skills earlier in the

semester, and change the language of exam questions to make them clearer to students. In a few cases, Quantitative Literacy instructors did not suggest plans for improvement and the Faculty Learning Community encouraged them to consider what might be done for the students who are not succeeding on their course assessments.

Assessment Results and Future Plans for Quantitative Literacy Instructors

In the Quantitative Literacy category, there was a great deal of agreement across instructors on what criteria are critical for demonstrating proficiency in quantitative literacy. However, in this set of course portfolios, the use of a common rubric for the assessment of student work was not a requirement and a common format was not used for reporting assessment results. Therefore, assessment results for Quantitative Literacy could not readily be aggregated. In the absence of a common assessment tool, the results of each instructor’s assessment data were examined by the Assessment Coordinator to determine what was revealed about student learning. From the grades and ratings given by instructors, it is clear from their point of view that a simple majority of students are meeting or exceeding expectations for learning related to the Quantitative Literacy Learning Outcomes selected. In most classes, at least 50% of the students fell into the top two categories on the assessment rubric used by each instructor. While a common rubric was not used, because there was a great deal of agreement and similarity in the criteria used for assessment of quantitative literacy, developing a common rubric for future assessment efforts seems a natural next step.

While over half of the students in Quantitative Literacy appear to be meeting or exceeding expectations, in several of the sections, 30 percent or more of the students fell into the lowest and/or second lowest categories on the assessment results matrix. Descriptors used for the lowest category included “Beginning,” “Unsatisfactory,” “Unacceptable,” “Developing,” “Low Competency,” and “No Attempt.” Descriptors for the second lowest category included “Emerging,” “Developing,” “Problematic,” “Adequate,” and “Satisfactory.” Some of these descriptors clearly indicate that falling into the category either does or does not qualify as meeting expectations for learning, but others are less clear. The presentation of the assessment results and the accompanying narrative did not always shed light on the instructor’s interpretation of student performance in relation to meeting the GEP Quantitative Literacy learning outcomes.

Quantitative Literacy instructors had a number of ideas for how to improve/support student learning in their courses. The table below indicates where the focus of the proposed measures/changes fell:

Focus of Change	%
Curriculum (What is taught)	5
Instruction (How it is taught)	69
Assessment (How student work is assessed)	26

Some examples of the changes suggested by Quantitative Literacy instructors included increasing the class time spent on the assessed project, pre-testing to determine students skills and inform instruction, giving more problem solving assignments like the ones assessed, making sure tutorials meet the needs of students (class demographics have changed with the change in the General Education Program), increasing student participation rates, spending more time on problems that are interesting to students, and aligning course content with instructors in other departments.

Wellness

While four course portfolios were submitted for Wellness, only three were uploaded in a complete form to D2L and reviewed by the Faculty Learning Community. The three course portfolios included the assessment of student work from Food and Nutrition 151, Health Promotion and Wellness 102, and Wellness 100, all foundational wellness courses that are taken by first year students. The Wellness category originally included twelve different courses/instructors, but five of the instructors requested removal of the GEP Wellness designation when they saw that their courses did not address all three of the learning outcomes. And three instructors, in the same department, requested and were granted the time to revise their courses to meet the Wellness designation and submit course portfolios in the fall of 2014. While a common rubric was not used across all of the courses, all of the course portfolios included clearly delineated criteria for assessment of student work (see Appendix E for an illustrative rubric).

While all instructors were expected to address all of the GEP Wellness Learning Outcomes in their courses, each instructor could choose which learning outcome or outcomes to use for guiding the assessment of student work included in the portfolio. Of the three instructors, one chose to assess one learning outcome, one chose to assess two learning outcomes, and one chose to assess all three learning outcomes. While there are only three instructors in this category, which can distort the percentages, the table below presents a breakdown of what percentage of instructors assessed each of the GEP Wellness Category Learning Outcomes and demonstrates that the learning outcomes were evenly represented in course portfolios:

LO#	Upon completing this requirement, students will be able to:	%
LO 1	Identify the seven dimensions of wellness	67
LO 2	Recognize the interaction between each dimension of wellness and their overall impact on personal, national and global health and well-being	67
LO 3	Develop an individual plan for healthy living that demonstrates an understanding of the principles of wellness	67

The same Faculty Learning Community reviewed all course portfolios for Wellness, completed a Course Portfolio Rubric for each instructor, and uploaded completed rubrics into D2L for the instructor's viewing. The table below presents the summary data from across Course Portfolio Rubrics, and the

comments that follow are drawn from feedback given to individual instructors as well as comments from the Faculty Learning Community Summary Report.

Table 5: Summary of Course Portfolio Rubric Data for Wellness Faculty Learning Community

	Wellness	Meets Expectations	Developing	Does Not Meet Expectations	No Level Selected	Optional Element Not Included
1	Course Syllabus	67	33	0	0	0
2	Explanation of Alignment	100	0	0	0	0
3	Outcomes Measured	100	0	0	0	0
4	Description of Activities Assessed	100	0	0	0	0
5	Rubric (Optional)	100	0	0	0	0
6	Description of the Criteria	100	0	0	0	0
7	Summarize Assessment Results	0	67	0	33	0
8	Charts, Graphs, and/or Tables (Optional)	33	0	0	0	67
9	Results from Other Feedback Mechanisms (Optional)	33	0	0	0	67
10	Samples of Student Work	100	0	0	0	0
11	Plans for Improvement	100	0	0	0	0

As the chart above illustrates, the Wellness instructors successfully completed all required components of the course portfolio and received very positive feedback from the Faculty Learning Community. Suggestions for improvement mainly focused on the “Course Syllabus,” where the Faculty Learning Community felt that “course learning outcomes and assignments did not completely or directly align with all GEP learning outcomes,” and, like both the Communication and Quantitative Literacy Faculty Learning Communities, the Wellness Faculty Learning Community recommended that the GEP Wellness Learning Outcomes and explanation of alignment with course learning outcomes be included on each course syllabus. The only other area of the course portfolios that drew attention was in “Summarize Assessment Results” where the Faculty Learning Community asked for the inclusion of the total number of students enrolled in the course, a breakdown of the percentage of students who performed at each level of the rubric, and an explanation for why there was a somewhat significant percentage of students who did not complete the assessed assignment.

Assessment Results and Future Plans for Wellness Instructors

Although there were only three course portfolios submitted in this category, assessment results could not be easily aggregated because it was not a requirement for instructors to use a common rubric for the assessment of student work or a common format for reporting assessment results. In the absence of a common assessment tool, the results of each instructor’s

assessment data were examined by the Assessment Coordinator to determine what was revealed about student learning. From the grades and ratings given by instructors, it is clear from their point of view that a majority of students are meeting or exceeding expectations for learning related to the Wellness Learning Outcomes selected. The vast majority of students (above 90%) fell into the top two categories when an assessment rubric was used by the instructor and scored in the A/B range if a course average was provided.

In reflecting on the assessment results, Wellness instructors had a variety of ideas for how to improve/support student learning in their courses. The table below indicates where the focus of the proposed measures/changes fell:

Focus of Change	%
Curriculum (What is taught)	20
Instruction (How it is taught)	60
Assessment (How student work is assessed)	20

Some examples of the changes suggested by Wellness instructors included changing the focus of the assessed assignment from setting goals for Wellness to developing habits, which the instructor felt required ongoing effort, consistency and the use of skills and strategies; allowing students to revise their work based on instructor feedback; and “enticing” students to go beyond the minimum work required.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the implementation of the GEP Assessment process for the Foundation Level went extremely smoothly, especially given that it was an entirely new General Education program for our campus and the assessment process had never been implemented before. The submission rate for course portfolios from instructors teaching in the four Foundation Level categories was very high, and, in most cases, if portfolios were not submitted, it was due to a realization that the course did not meet GEP Learning Outcomes and a request was made to withdraw the GEP designation. Filling out the membership of each Faculty Learning Community with 4 – 6 faculty members also went exceptionally well, despite the fact that participation was voluntary. The survey feedback from faculty who served on the Faculty Learning Communities indicated that they found the experience worthwhile, with many positive comments like, “It was wonderful getting together with colleagues to discuss educational topics in a casual learning environment,” and “great networking, great personal development, excited to see what else it will lead to.”

The strengths of the course portfolios noted by Faculty Learning Communities across all four Foundation Level categories included solid alignment between course learning outcomes/ activities and GEP category learning outcomes, a strong match between student work chosen for assessment and the GEP learning outcomes, the inclusion of assessed student work samples for different levels of achievement, and a great variety of strategies/changes suggested by instructors to address perceived student needs in their classrooms. Challenges identified by the Faculty Learning Communities across all four categories included some disconnect between assessment criteria applied to student work and the actual GEP

learning outcomes, difficulty distinguishing between different levels of student achievement on specific criteria, especially when grades were the only data provided, and suggestions for changes to the course that had little to no connection to the assessment results.

After careful consideration of the course portfolios submitted, reported assessment results, Faculty Learning Community feedback to instructors, survey data from instructors and Faculty Learning Community members, and summary comments and recommendations from the four Faculty Learning Communities, the following recommendations are made for future efforts and actions, some of which have already been implemented:

- 1) Changes already made to General Education Program Assessment procedures, policies, and/or professional development for Year 2 of the GEP Assessment cycle, which focuses on Investigation Level courses in the Arts, Humanities, Historical Perspectives, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences
 - a. An increased number of informational sessions have been offered for Investigation Level instructors and department chairs, and have been offered earlier in the assessment cycle than for Foundation Level Instructors
 - b. The single professional development workshop provided for instructors on how to develop a course portfolio and upload materials electronically in Desire2Learn has been divided into two separate workshops; the first, a two-hour workshop, specifically focused on preparing materials for the course portfolio like the syllabus, explanation of alignment of course and GEP learning outcomes, developing and applying rubrics, reporting assessment results, and developing plans for improvement based on the results; and the second, an hour long workshop solely on how to upload an electronic version of course portfolio to Desire to Learn.
 - c. Based on the feedback from Foundation Level Faculty Learning Communities, Investigation Level instructors have been encouraged to include the GEP Category Learning Outcomes and an explanation of alignment to their course in their syllabus
 - d. While the UWSP Handbook language only specifies that a “discipline-appropriate evaluation of student attainment of at least one learning outcome” be used, copies of the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics have been shared in all Investigation Level assessment workshops and instructors have been encouraged to choose entire rubrics or criteria from the rubrics to assess student work in their courses
 - e. Based on feedback from course instructors and Faculty Learning Communities, the Course Portfolio Rubric has been revised to more clearly communicate what is needed for each component of the course portfolio
- 2) Recommendations for General Education Program/Committee Procedures
 - a. Reconvene all four Foundation Level Faculty Learning Communities this fall, along with representative instructors and General Education Committee members, to follow up on the assessment results and recommendations for changes/improvement, including:
 - i. Review and suggest any needed revisions for learning outcomes in each category based on the results of Foundation Level assessment. A suggestion might be to streamline the number of learning outcomes to two in each category, which would make it possible for instructors to assess student learning of all category learning outcomes through one or two well chosen course assessments, a recommendation from the Faculty Learning Communities

- ii. Specifically, revise First Year Seminar category learning outcomes. This was the recommendation from instructors and Faculty Learning Community members alike, as trying to teach and/or assess six learning outcomes turned out to be difficult and unwieldy. Based on the learning outcomes that were assessed when given the choice, the one focused on critical thinking and information literacy and the one focused on developing a plan that demonstrates the student's responsibility for their own education seemed to be the top choices of the instructors. Some of the other learning outcomes might be deemed important activities to include in First Year Seminars, but not necessarily learning outcomes to be assessed. Critical thinking seems especially important to retain as one of the First Year Seminar learning outcomes because it is part of the first "Overarching GEP Learning Outcomes" and a foundational skill for students pursuing a higher education
- iii. Develop a common assessment rubric for critical thinking to be used in all First Year Seminar courses, which would help provide consistency in assessing critical thinking and also clarify communication about critical thinking to students. This common critical thinking rubric could be used for other GEP Levels and for program assessment (critical thinking rubrics already being used on campus and the AAC&U VALUE Rubric for Critical Thinking would be valuable resources in this process). Since Information Literacy is included in the same learning outcome as critical thinking, a common rubric for Information Literacy might also be developed and applied across First Year Seminar courses
- iv. Form a Faculty Learning Community for the First Year Seminar category in the fall of 2015 and require all First Year Seminar course instructors teaching in that semester to submit course portfolios. This would provide an opportunity to assess the revised and streamlined First Year Seminar Learning Outcomes and apply the common rubric for Critical Thinking, and possibly Information Literacy
- v. Develop common assessment rubrics to be used for written communication, quantitative literacy, and wellness. There was already considerable agreement about assessment criteria amongst instructors in these categories and using common rubrics would provide for more consistency in assessment across students and courses, and would facilitate the aggregation of data. These common rubrics for foundational skills could then be used across campus for other GEP Levels and for program assessment (the rubrics already being used by English instructors and the AAC&U VALUE Rubric for Written Communication would be valuable resources in this process)
- vi. Form a Faculty Learning Community for the Wellness category in the fall of 2015 and require all Wellness instructors teaching at that time to submit course portfolios. This would provide an opportunity to assess courses that weren't ready to submit portfolios this past fall, assess new Wellness courses that are added this year, and apply the common rubric for Wellness that assesses the revised learning outcomes, if changes are made by the General Education Committee and Faculty Senate

3) Recommendations for General Education Program/Committee Policies

- a. Require that GEP Category Learning Outcomes and an explanation of alignment between these learning outcomes and the course/course activities be included in the

course syllabus portion of GEP course proposal form before a course is approved for the GEP

- b. As recommended by Faculty Learning Community members, require that GEP Category Learning Outcomes and an explanation of alignment between the course/course activities and the GEP learning outcomes be included in every syllabus submitted as part of the course portfolio process beginning with the Cultural and Environmental Awareness Level. Making this stipulation would create a smoother review process for the Faculty Learning Communities and streamline the course portfolio process for instructors.
- c. Add a summary table to the “Assessment Results” section of the course portfolio that includes GEP category learning outcome and asks instructors to provide percentages of students that fall into each of three categories: “Does not meet expectations, Meets expectations, Exceeds expectations.” This would greatly assist the Faculty Learning Communities with interpreting assessment results and the Assessment Coordinator with aggregating data and making recommendations to the General Education Committee. See example below:

GEP Assessment – Foundation Level – Written Communication

	Does not meet expectations (%)	Meets expectations (%)	Exceeds expectations (%)
LO 1			
LO 2			
LO 3			

- d. Consider an addition to the “Plans for Improvement” section that would ask instructors to explain plans for helping students who are not meeting expectations in their classes. Especially at the Foundation Level, students who are struggling with fundamental and necessary skills in writing, speaking, quantitative literacy, and critical thinking may be at risk for failing and/or leaving the university. Encouraging instructors to reflect on this issue in their course portfolio might help to contribute to overall retention of first year students.
- 4) Recommendations for General Education Program Professional Development
- a. Continue professional development efforts in the use of assessment rubrics and the reporting of data from the rubrics; the current set of course portfolios demonstrate that our campus has made great strides in this area, but feedback from the Faculty Learning Communities also suggest that further development is needed
 - b. Collaborate with the University Assessment Subcommittee to help disciplines/programs develop plans for integrating GEP assessment data into their Five-Year Program Assessment Reports, which helps to facilitate the assessment of the entire General Education Program from the first year through graduation, including the development of critical communication, quantitative literacy, critical thinking, and wellness skills throughout major courses
 - c. Consider offering professional development opportunities related to helping struggling first year students in Foundation Level courses. Some of the assessment results reported by instructors indicate that a small to sometimes significant portion of students do not meet expectations for the GEP learning outcomes and may indicate these students are at risk for failure and/or leaving the university

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The GEP Assessment Process for the Foundation Level went extremely well and demonstrates a strong commitment on the UW-Stevens Point campus to the assessment and improvement of student learning. There was much agreement demonstrated about what is important for students to know and be able to do in each of the four Foundation Level Categories and results demonstrate that, based on the best judgment of instructors, the majority of students are meeting or exceeding GEP learning outcomes in their courses. At the time the GEP Assessment Plan was drafted, it was determined that instructors should apply a "discipline-appropriate evaluation," and the decision was left to them to determine what this assessment should be. The results from this first round of assessment demonstrate that there is significant agreement about key assessment criteria amongst instructors in each category and that agreeing on common assessment rubrics for future use is well within reach and could begin to be implemented as soon as the spring of 2015. The use of common rubrics (locally created and drawn from the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics where deemed appropriate) would increase consistency of assessment across students and courses, simplify the analysis of data and the reporting of assessment results, and allow for the aggregation of data within General Education Program categories and across the entire General Education Program. The assessment process currently in place, as described in this report, supports scholarly and collaborative inquiry into teaching and learning and promotes thoughtful reflection on instructional practices. The aim should be to continue to support this important and unique aspect of the GEP Assessment process, while also addressing needs for reliable assessment and accountability.

Appendix A

Faculty Learning Community “Summary Report” Template GEP Assessment: 2013-2014

Part I: Summary Data for Foundation Level GEP Assessment

The data for these components will be provided by the Assessment Coordinator and Director of General Education:

GEP Category:	
Number of ePortfolios:	#
Number of Students:	#
Additional Notes:	

Part II: Feedback from FLCs

Instructions:

Each FLC group will receive a separate “Summary Report” template (this document). Those supporting you in these efforts will do our best to fill in the aggregated rubric “DATA” for each of the various rubric components (ideally, an automated process within D2L should provide this data).

Note: you might receive this template (at first) without this data entered. If that’s the case, we hope to have the data to you as soon as we can. Nevertheless, we think you can probably proceed with providing your *qualitative feedback* in the areas below (these are the boxes shaded in GREEN).

Key idea: FLC participants should reflect on the strengths, challenges, trends/patterns, and suggestions for each criteria (row) found on the ePortfolio rubric (shaded in GREEN below). Focus on the most significant points to make; the expectation is not to provide extensive details for every category.

Also: Please do not include specific information about courses, instructors, or students. Your comments in the GREEN boxes below will be shared with the General Education Committee and will enter faculty governance as part of the official (open) record.

Thank you! We truly appreciate your efforts on behalf of the General Education Program and the university as a whole!

A. Course Syllabus (alignment with GEP learning outcomes)

	Meets Expectations	Developing Toward	Did Not Meet				
Course Syllabus	%	%	%				
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Syllabi Submitted:</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Syllabi Submitted:						
Syllabi Submitted:							
Strengths:							
Challenges:							
Trends/Patterns:							
Suggestions:							

B. Outcomes Measured

	Meets Expectations	Developing Toward	Did Not Meet
Outcomes Measured:	%	%	%
Strengths:			
Challenges:			
Trends/Patterns:			
Suggestions:			

C. Activities Assessed

	Meets Expectations	Developing Toward	Did Not Meet
Description of the Activity	%	%	%

Assessment Criteria	%	%	%
Rubrics Included: #			
Strengths:			
Challenges:			
Trends/Patterns:			
Suggestions:			

D. Assessment Results

	Meets Expectations	Developing Toward	Did Not Meet
Summarize assessment results\ Charts, graphs, and/or tables included: #	%	%	%
Strengths:			
Challenges:			
Trends/Patterns:			
Suggestions:			
Optional: results from other (indirect) feedback mechanisms:			
Strengths:			
Challenges:			
Trends/Patterns:			
Suggestions:			

E. Samples of Student Work

	Meets Expectations	Developing Toward	Did Not Meet
Samples of Student Work:	%	%	%
Strengths:			
Challenges:			
Trends/Patterns:			
Suggestions:			

F. Plans for Improvement

	Meets Expectations	Developing Toward	Did Not Meet
Plans for Improvement:	%	%	%
Strengths:			
Challenges:			
Trends/Patterns:			
Suggestions:			

Part III: Global Feedback for the GEC: Summary of Significant Findings from FLCs

A. Course ePortfolios & Faculty Learning Communities

- Did the ePortfolios include useful information? Was there anything that was extraneous? Was there anything that should (or should not) be included in ePortfolios in the future?
- As a process, what feedback do you have about the use of ePortfolios and Faculty Learning Communities? How could the process be improved?

Please explain:

B. Course/Assignment Design, Instructional Strategies, and/or Assessment Methods

- What course/assignment design worked particularly well for these learning outcomes?
- What instructional Strategies worked particularly well for these learning outcomes?
- What assessment methods worked particularly well for these learning outcomes?

Please explain:

C. New insights related to student learning:

- Are instructors (and/or FLC participants) reflecting on student learning and developing responses to help support student achievement of these learning outcomes?
- Are instructors (and/or FLC participants) identifying any learning outcomes that students are not achieving? (i.e., identifying “blockages” to learning in a constructive, developmental way)

Please explain:

D. Overall feedback:

- Were there any learning outcomes in this GEP category that need to be addressed? (e.g., too many learning outcomes; learning outcomes not written in measurable/observable way; some learning outcomes weren't addressed in any of the ePortfolios submitted; reports that some learning outcomes were difficult to assess)
- Are there any other GEP issues (curriculum itself, assessment process, administrative, or governance) that should be considered?

Please explain:

Appendix B

Timeline for Delinquent Course Portfolios:

Feb. 1: Course portfolios are due

Feb. 8: Assessment Coordinator will contact instructors who have not submitted portfolios, reminding them of the missed deadline and requesting submission within one week.

Feb. 15: If the portfolio has not been submitted, Assessment Coordinator will contact instructor again, copying the instructor's Chair and Dean.

Mar. 1: Provost and General Education Committee are notified, and further action may be taken.

Appendix C