

## RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE FYS ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE:

LSC Response

April 17, 2018

In reviewing the process, we offer some questions that may warrant further exploration rather than concrete recommendations on how to change or improve the current assessment process.

1. How do we measure and quantify the Liberal Studies learning objectives? While there are seven learning objectives for the FYS, which is a sizeable number in itself, the breakdown of sub-skills within the learning objectives equates to 44 different sub-skills being included on the assessment rubrics.

**The LSC recognizes the challenge in assessing so many disparate learning outcomes and sub-outcomes. In response to data generated by previous assessment reports, the LSC adopted a set of eight streamlined learning outcomes (and accompanying rubrics) in February 2018. These new outcomes will be implemented within all Core courses in the fall 2018 semester and within all Perspectives courses in the spring 2019 semester.**

2. Is it possible to assess the Liberal Studies learning objectives without access to the course assignments and syllabi? Although we were provided with a small sample of syllabi, these were likely not the syllabi for the courses in which the writings were produced. A significant challenge we faced was assessing the student artifacts while attempting to infer what the assignment prompt required of each student. This issue was exacerbated by the diversity of courses, disciplines, and subject matter included within the FYS courses.

**The LSC has adopted a new assessment process, in which faculty are asked to submit their course syllabi in tandem with their student artifacts. Folders have been created on the H: Drive for this very purpose.**

3. Is there a way to collect and assess the data faster? Our report is based on data that is over two years old. While there may be interesting conclusions to glean from the data, there may have been enough changes among the FYS within the past two years to make any conclusions less relevant.

4. The coordination between the Liberal Studies faculty-based sub-committee and the Office of Assessment led to lengthy wait times to access data. While the committee felt it was appropriate for data analysis to come from the Office of Assessment, it appears that the Office of Assessment is understaffed to provide results and input in a reasonable timeframe, particularly when it occurs during the in the same time window as SACSCOC or other university-wide assessments.

**The LSC sees the response to recommendations 3 and 4 as related. This is an issue that has been noted in previous assessment reports, as well. In response to the staffing issues within the Office of Assessment, the LSC has established procedures for collecting and managing data independently, so as to expedite the dissemination of data to relevant stakeholders.**

5A. Prior to beginning an assessment, develop an assessment plan that is clear to faculty. This assessment was methodologically flawed as assessment was changed multiple times (differing Directors of Assessment) after syllabi and student artifacts were already submitted. Student artifacts submitted did not correlate to faculty-intended assessment of student learning outcomes. Further, the assessment team did not have access to the actual assignments, so it was difficult to ascertain if students met instructor's expectations.

**To address this issue, the LSC will create a new assessment plan during the Fall 2018 semester that takes into account consistent assessment methodology, as well as the recently approved student learning outcomes and revised procedures for data collection.**

5B. Add to the WCU Faculty Advising Guide and the Liberal Studies Faculty Resource Handbook that first year students are assigned a FYS or English course. This will ensure instructors understand that students have not (in most cases) taken a college-level English course yet.

**The LSC Chair will contact the Coulter Faculty Commons by the end of the 2018 spring semester to ask for the suggested document revision.**

5C. The FYS should be taught by the best faculty departments have to offer: faculty who are a good fit for and understand first-year students and faculty who inspire. Teaching the FYS should become a privilege and should be recognized as a high-value teaching assignment.

**The LSC recommends that WCU administrators provide the resources necessary to support FYS instruction as a high-value teaching assignment, so that strong instructors will continue to teach FYS courses and departments will continue offer them.**

5D. It would be beneficial to offer faculty who are new to the FYS a professional development session of some sort to work with veteran faculty and/or Coulter Faculty Commons for the course so they can understand the unique nature of the FYS.

**The LSC Chair will contact the Office of Student Transitions by the end of the 2018 spring semester to inquire about the history and prior success/failure of professional development to support FYS.**