

## Department of Social Sciences Assessment Report

The Department of Social Sciences offers Associate of Arts degree programs in Economics, Global Studies, History, Philosophy, Political Science, and Women's Studies.

In 2012, an interim legislative committee recommended that the Nevada System of Higher Education move from an enrollment-based funding formula to a completion-based funding formula. In anticipation of this change in funding metrics, NSHE Regents and CSN administration entered into an agreement with Complete College America and Achieving the Dream. These two entities provided resources and guidance to restructure student services to promote improved retention and completions.

In 2013, the Nevada System of Higher Education officially adopted the new funding formula that switched funding from enrollments to completions. The Regents had to reconcile the mission of the community colleges, which is access, with the new reality of retention and completion. Part of the reconciliation was to instruct the institutions to be more purposeful in assisting students. On the academic side of the house, CSN faculty assisted in restructuring General Education requirements as well as individual degree sheets.

Social Science assessment activities reflect these broader trends.

### **Standard 4: Effectiveness and Improvement**

#### **4.A.1. Collection & analysis of meaningful assessable, & verifiable data**

##### Economics:

The Economics degree (AA) at CSN has two different track options, one stated as General Economics and one stated as Applied Financial Economics (AFE). In past years, the assessment plans had been different based on these two options – with the AFE option being particularly cumbersome. At this point, the discipline has decided to streamline the process to some degree and use a single assessment tool for both cases. Since for each track, students would all have completed at least the same sequence of Principles of Micro Economics (Econ 102), Principles of Macro Economics (Econ 103), and Principles of Statistics I (Econ 261) – our assessment tool aims to address the key abilities related to this course sequence.

We have developed an assessment exam at the Program level (for Majors) consisting of six (6) essay questions where students are asked to complete 4 of the 6 offered. The questions were chosen to assess key thinking skills specific to Economics and in particular to reflect what is often termed 'Thinking like an Economist. Some questions will also relate to demonstrating an ability to use and apply common graphical tools found within introductory courses within the discipline, along with developed quantitative skills. The grading rubric mainly seeks to have the student response show mastery far beyond how someone might have attempted to answer without having had this course sequence.

An Assessment Plan at the course level within the Economics was discussed and contemplated during the Spring 2015 semester, with the first implementation aimed at starting during Fall 2015. It was determined to begin by using just Econ 103 as a test case, with plans to then implement a similar assessment instrument for Econ 102 or Econ 261 possibly on a rotating basis. Thus, for Econ 103 we plan to use the Pearson My Econ Lab website structure to give a 5-10 question multiple choice question set to be completed by all students enrolled in Econ 103 that semester (including both on-

ground and online sections). The results of this assessment will be a single large pool from among all sections, rather than separate for each section. This was determined to alleviate concerns of the assessment being used to target any one instructor or perhaps say any one class format. Sheri Perez has agreed to take charge of the main implementation details due to her experience and expertise within My Econ Lab. Students will be sent a URL along with related instructions. Faculty will all have access to the results. My Econ Lab provides for a free temporary trial period without charge, so we will work with the publishing rep to ensure students will bear no additional costs while still being open and upfront about what we are doing with the publisher.

### Global Studies:

At the start of each semester, each instructor teaching one of the aforementioned global studies courses will randomly choose 3 students (who are NOT political science majors) from each of their sections of the relevant course being taught that term. Essay exams and term paper assignments from the selected students will be copied by the instructors and collected.

### History:

The assignments produced by History-declared majors in HIST 251 will be reviewed annually by a committee made up of full-time history faculty appointed in consultation between the lead faculty and the department chair.

At the start of each semester, the lead faculty will select an instructor for each course being taught. This instructor will randomly choose three students from each of his or her sections of the course. The instructors will copy and collect the written assignments from those students. The same committee performing the program assessment will review them annually.

### Philosophy:

At the end of each semester, data will be collected both from each section of Philosophy 102, Critical Thinking/Reasoning and from each section of Philosophy 101, Introduction to Philosophy. From Philosophy 102, the scores from the final test will be recorded. From Philosophy 101, the scores from one significant assignment chosen by the instructor will be recorded. In addition, the number of students enrolled that completed the final test (for 102) or the assignment (for 101), and that earned a C (70%) or better on the test or assignment will be recorded.

### Political Science:

At the start of each semester, each instructor that is teaching one of the aforementioned political science courses will randomly choose 3 students (who are NOT political science majors) from each of their sections of the relevant course being taught that term. Essay exams and term paper assignments from the selected students will be copied by the instructors and collected.

### Women's Studies:

At the start of each semester, each instructor who teaches one of the key Women's Studies courses randomly chooses three students (who are not WMST majors) from each section taught that term. Essay exams or other term assignments from the selected students are copied and saved.

The collected student work is reviewed annually by a committee of full-time faculty who are appointed in consultation with the Lead Faculty and the Department Chair. The committee members will

independently determine whether the materials as a whole meet each of the respective learning outcomes according to the following ratings: “meets standards,” “exceeds standards,” or “does not meet standards.”

#### **4.A.2. Evaluate achievement of clearly identified program goals or outcomes**

##### Economics:

Each instructor of Econ 103 will be asked to send to the lead faculty a list of which students completed this assessment. In future semesters, it is anticipated that a similar measure will be used for Econ 102 and Econ 261. The Econ 102 instrument would be developed within the McGraw Hill Econ Connect product, and for Econ 261 the assessment instrument would be developed with LaunchPad. In both cases, we have already discussed this with the appropriate publisher reps to again ensure no additional cost to students and to be upfront and have the cooperation of the publisher.

##### Global Studies:

The collected essay exams, research papers, and other written assignments are reviewed annually by a committee made up of full-time faculty who are appointed in consultation between the lead faculty and the department chair. The committee members will independently determine whether the materials as a whole indicate that each of the respective learning outcomes have been met according to the following ratings: “meets standards,” “exceeds standards” or “does not meet standards.”

##### History:

Discipline committee members will independently determine whether the materials as a whole indicate that each of the respective learning outcomes has been met according to the following ratings: "Meets Standards", "Exceeds Standards," or "Does Not Meet Standards." The lead faculty will then prepare a summary report to be shared with the department chair and full-time history faculty and reported to the college assessment office.

##### Philosophy:

The collected test results from Philosophy 102 and major assignments from Philosophy 101 are reviewed annually by a committee made up of full-time faculty who are appointed in consultation between the lead faculty and the department chair. The committee members will independently determine whether the materials as a whole indicate that each of the respective learning outcomes have been met according to the following ratings: “meets standards,” “exceeds standards” or “does not meet standards.”

##### Political Science:

The collected essay exams, research papers, and other written assignments are reviewed annually by a committee made up of Political Science full-time faculty who are appointed in consultation between the lead faculty and the department chair. The committee members will independently determine whether the materials as a whole indicate that each of the respective learning outcomes have been met according to the following ratings: “meets standards,” “exceeds standards” or “does not meet standards.”

## Women's Studies:

The collected student work is reviewed annually by a committee of full-time faculty who are appointed in consultation with the Lead Faculty and the Department Chair. The committee members will independently determine whether the materials as a whole meet each of the respective learning outcomes according to the following ratings: "meets standards," "exceeds standards," or "does not meet standards."

### **4.A.3. Students achieve identified course, program, & degree learning outcomes**

In 2014, Social Sciences faculty participated in revising and creating new policies focused on student retention and success. These include a no late registration policy, a new syllabus policy, a new faculty evaluation policy, an academic suspension and probation policy, and a non-traditional education credit policy. Additionally, faculty in each discipline wrote "degree pathways" to facilitate a more rational path to graduation

The Department of Social Sciences has complied with CSN Academic Review policy for evaluating academic programs in planning curriculum and the allocation of resources, for achieving the intended outcomes of its programs and for achieving its core theme objectives/learning outcomes.

The identified outcomes, based on the agreed upon degree sheets for the Department of Social Sciences, are as follows:

## Economics:

- Demonstrate an understanding of economic concepts and applications emphasizing economic theoretical perspectives.
- Demonstrate knowledge of alternative forms of market structure and their resulting social impact.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the nature of the U.S. banking system and how the Federal Reserve System implements monetary policy.
- Demonstrate abilities to utilize investment science and risk management to optimize investment decision making processes.
- Demonstrate an ability to use the language of economics to form reasoned judgments about contemporary issues.

## Global Studies:

- Through oral and/or written arguments present logically and internally consistent arguments from a variety of sides of a contemporary global issue or event.
- Analyze, reformulate issues, and proffer solutions using the art of compassionate critical thinking.
- Through oral and/or written argument demonstrate an understanding of the interconnectedness of global events.
- Through oral and/or written arguments demonstrate an appreciation that people the world over face

many of the same global issues despite their diverse values and traditions.

### History:

- Demonstrate an understanding of the contours of history as a varied field of study encompassing social, political, economic, constitutional, and cultural history.
- Demonstrate an understanding of history in general, and the interplay of world, national, and/or local events in the shaping of the world in which we live, and a better appreciation of the student's role in society.
- Demonstrate appropriate oral and written communications skills.
- Demonstrate critical thinking skills.
- Demonstrate abilities to do research and find information on historical and current events.

### Philosophy:

- Demonstrate knowledge of influential thinkers and arguments that have been advanced in the history of the Western intellectual tradition.
- Demonstrate knowledge of some of the most influential thinkers and arguments that have been advanced by contemporary thinkers.
- Demonstrate knowledge of some of the core concepts and vocabulary related to metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, aesthetics, and logic.
- Demonstrate an ability to think critically, such as the ability to produce and identify various types of arguments, to produce and identify good arguments, to identify inconsistencies in sets of claims, to identify the presumptions of claims, and to identify the implications of claims.
- Demonstrate the ability to think objectively, that is, dispassionately, about their own and other's personal convictions whether they are religious, political, or social in nature.

### Political Science:

- Demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights, the Nevada Constitution, the role of the various branches of government, America's diverse political values and beliefs, political parties, interest groups, the electoral process, and the development of our civil liberties and rights. The course to be used to assess this objective will be Political Science 101 (Introduction to American Politics).
- Analyze and compare domestic politics within each of several diverse countries, including analysis of various types of political systems and institutions, political actors, political culture, the impact of ethnic and religious diversity within countries, and competing political and economic ideologies. The course to be used for assessing this objective will be Political Science 211 (Introduction to Comparative Politics).

- Explore and evaluate competing theoretical approaches to international relations, including an analysis of arguable causes and consequences of war, real-world political relations between nations, relations between regions of the world, the role of diverse international actors, and the role of the United States in world politics. The course to be used for assessing this objective will be Political Science 231 (Introduction to International Relations).
- Examine major political theories and philosophies and explain how they informed the American Founder's ideas and reforms that have transpired over time. The course to be used to assess this objective will be Political Science 200 (Introduction to Political Theory).

#### Women's Studies:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the contributions that women have made throughout history in all aspects of life, sources of their omission from traditional approaches to scholarship and traditional centers of power, and contemporary issues concerning gender and sexual orientation in culture and society.
- Demonstrate knowledge of feminist theories, multidisciplinary perspectives, feminist research methodologies and ethics, global and local activism, and structural and cultural analyses, especially the intersectionality of gender, race, and class.
- Demonstrate the ability to think abstractly, read critically, analyze situations, organize material, write well, and conduct oral presentations, all of which are useful skills that employers welcome.

#### **4.A.4. Alignment, correlation, & integration of programs & services**

The Department of Social Sciences evaluates holistically the alignment, correlation, and integration of its programs with respect to accomplishment of each department discipline's core theme objectives/learning outcomes.

#### **4.A.5. Alignment, correlation, & integration of planning, resources, capacity, practices, & assessment**

The assessments of the Department of Social Sciences by its respective disciplines inform its planning of resources, capacity, and policies with respect to the achievement of the core theme objectives and/or learning outcomes. Faculty now looking at ways to improve assessment to capture not only degree majors, but also the general student population. As each individual class now factors into the overall college completion rates, assessment strategies must be more granular and include more generalized skill-sets.

#### **4.A.6. Reviews assessment processes**

The full-time Social Sciences faculty members meet on a regular basis to discuss outcomes (Program, Course, and General Education), whether they need to be reformed, and how assignments can be revised to validly and reliably assess the accomplishment of outcomes. In particular, the Global Studies faculty is committed to ensuring that part-time faculty, as well as new or recent hires, are aware of learning outcomes and are using assignments that are designed to properly and appropriately accomplish outcomes.

#### **4.B. Improvement**

#### 4.B.1. Core theme & results of assessments of programs & services

[Retention/Persistence and ATD HELC numbers from SS can go here, Psych, Phil 102, etc.]

As of 2015, Social Sciences faculty are looking at ways to improve assessment to capture not only degree majors, but also the general student population. As each individual class now factors into the overall college completion rates, assessment strategies must be more granular and include more generalized skill-sets.

#### 4.B.2. Uses the results to inform academic & learning-support planning & practices

The lead faculty of each Social Sciences program (Economics, Global Studies, History, Philosophy, Political Science and Women's Studies) annually prepares a summary report to be shared with the department chair and full-time faculty and is reported to the CSN Office of Institutional Research.