

HLC Embedded Report April 2023

INSTITUTION: Diné College

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER: Dr. Charles Roessel

DATE SUBMITTED: March 6, 2023

ACTION: To address needs identified in the December 5, 2018, final report concerning Core Component 4.B as related to the General Education assessment process and use of data (closing the loop). The report rated Core Component 4.B in its entirety as “met with concerns.”

CORE COMPONENT 4.B: The institution demonstrates a commitment to educational achievement and improvement through ongoing assessment of student learning.

1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.
3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.
4. The institution’s processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

AREAS OF FOCUS:

- 1. The institution has clearly stated goals for student learning and effective processes for assessment of student learning and achievement of learning goals.**

Background: The 2018 report found that the process was incomplete for determining Student Learning Outcomes for all General Education courses. While some SLO’s were clearly stated, others had not yet been defined. Academic deans had not come to a consensus as to how SLO’s are uniformly evaluated across all four schools (STEM, Arts & Humanities, Business & Social Science, and Diné Studies and Education). Without SLO’s in place, artifacts were not being uniformly collected, assessment activities were incomplete, and the college was not providing meaningful reports to inform initiatives to improve student learning.

Diné College believes that assessment of student learning—both in General Education and at the program level—is essential in order to guarantee that the institution is providing consistent, quality education to students and continuously striving to improve. The HLC’s last site visit and subsequent report served as a wakeup call to the college. That response was amplified during the past six months as Diné College reviewed its progress since the last HLC visit and found its assessment programs lacking.

Action Plan: The HLC directed the college to demonstrate creation and monitoring of uniform, college-wide processes.

Discussion: Since the 2018 report was released, Diné College made some substantial changes in how it assesses General Education. The most significant change occurred in the fall of 2017 when the college eliminated its Office of Academic Assessment. The rationale was that assessment should be faculty-driven instead of dictated by administration. Beginning with Spring Semester 2018, assessment activities have fallen under the purview of the General Education Committee, which is comprised of 8-10 faculty (at least two voting members from each of the four schools) and a staff member from the Registrar's Office.

However, the General Education Assessment Handbook that was prepared by the Office of Academic Assessment in late 2017 was never completed. Nor was it made available to the wider college community. Additional challenges came with the COVID-19 pandemic—which effectively shut the college down for two years—and high turnover rates among the faculty, which affected the makeup and efficiency of the GenEd Committee. The committee did not follow up on the HLC's recommendations until Fall Semester 2022. At that time, a new chair was appointed to lead the committee, and the committee began meeting twice per month. One of its first items of business was to solidify SLO's for General Education courses, with feedback from faculty and school deans (**see Appendix A and B**). A second priority was completing and revising the General Education Assessment handbook. In the process of developing an assessment handbook, the GenEd Committee discovered gaps, errors, and inconsistencies in stated processes.

By January 2023, the GenEd Committee had a list of SLO's approved by academic deans and a completed assessment handbook, which includes:

- A revised GenEd Committee mission statement, statement of purpose, and list of committee/assessment goals
- Complete list of Student Learning Outcomes, defined by faculty and deans, and aligned to the college's different disciplines
- A uniform syllabus statement to be included in all Gen Ed course syllabi
- Instructions for adding existing courses to the Gen Ed Core
- Detailed instructions about how to collect and review artifacts
- Process maps detailing the assessment process, which includes an end-of-cycle report
- A list of Gen Ed Core courses
- Relevant documents, including a copy of the Artifacts Identification Card and submission form for adding an existing course to the Gen Ed Core

In the process of developing its first draft of the General Education Assessment handbook, the GenEd Committee discovered several concepts that still need major revision. These include the Student Learning Outcomes, which need to be reconceptualized to better align

with goals and outcomes stated by other HLC-accredited colleges and universities. Another area that needs immediate attention is the assessment process itself. In reviewing existing documents and procedures, the GenEd Committee determined that it was unclear whether the college had ever conducted quality, comprehensive assessment of its General Education program. As previously stated, SLO's were incomplete, the assessment cycle was poorly defined, and the college was not "closing the loop" in any meaningful way.

The GenEd Committee is now working on a complete revision of the process. This began with establishing a new mission statement to guide the General Education program, which includes a list of SLO's that are easier to measure and more in line with other institutions' SLO's. Instead of trying to define a separate SLO for each school or discipline, the GenEd Committee decided to adopt broader SLO's that are no longer discipline-specific, but that can be measured in a variety of Gen Ed courses.

The revised mission statement for the General Education Core is:

Hooghandóó dóó Adahwiis'áágóó óhoo'áá' yee náásdoogááł. The purpose of the Diné College General Education curriculum is to act as a bridge to the broader world that is built upon a foundation of Diné history, language, and culture. The General Education curriculum enables students to pursue their academic and professional aspirations. Students will explore experiences that consider diverse world views, philosophies, cultures, and contemporary life that is consistent with the principles contained within Sá'ah Naaghái Bik'eh Hózhóón. This educational bridge consists of the student's ability to write clearly, think critically, speak effectively, reason mathematically, and creative self-expression that promotes social and personal responsibility, ethical reasoning, and civic knowledge and engagement to address local and global issues.

The revised SLO's are found in the mission statement and are as follows: write clearly, think critically, speak effectively, reason mathematically, and self-express creatively.

By reconceptualizing the SLO's, the GenEd Committee began simplifying the assessment process. The committee is currently rewriting its assessment handbook. The new SLO's will be listed in the handbook, along with a detailed process map that clearly spells out instructions for faculty and schools to decide which and how many artifacts to collect, where to submit artifacts, assessment activities (at the end of every semester), and the reporting process. The new handbook will also include rubrics for each of the stated SLO's that can be modified to meet the college's unique needs. These rubrics were adopted from the American Association of Colleges and Universities' [VALUE system](#).

The new handbook will be in place by the end of the Spring 2023 semester. Adoption of the handbook will go through proper channels: approval by the GenEd Committee, approval by the Faculty Association, and approval by the Provost Council. It will then be published and made available to everyone in the Diné College community.

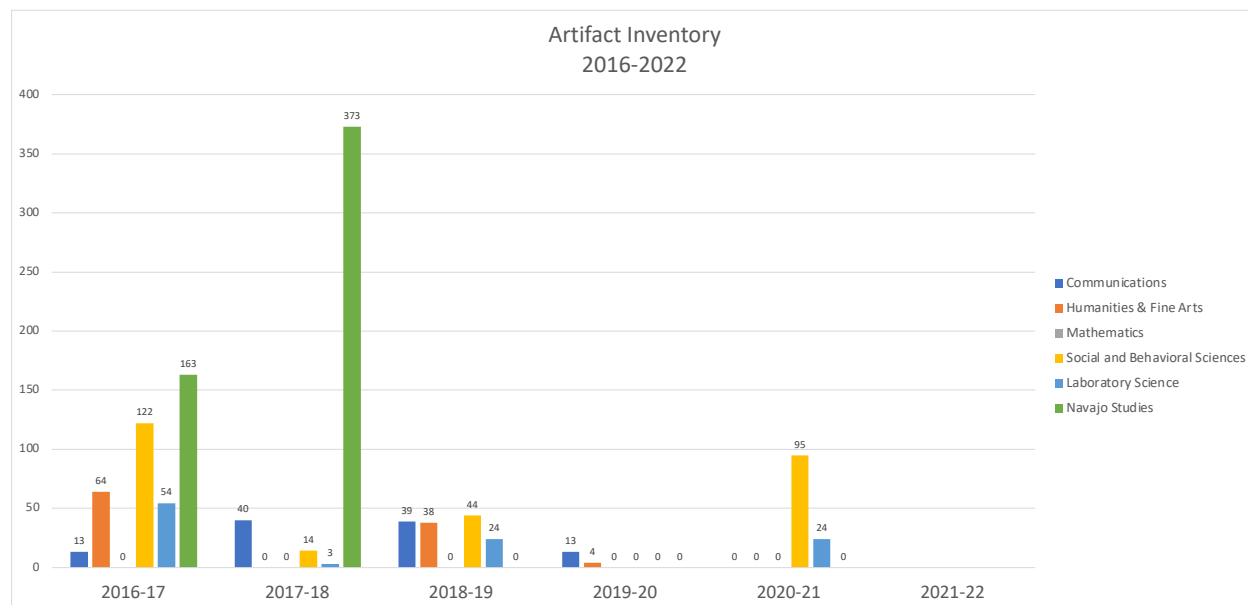
2. The institution assesses achievement of the learning outcomes that it claims for its curricular and co-curricular programs.

Background: In its 2018 report, the HLC found that course- and program-level assessment measures were in place, but that assessment of institutional learning goals and co-curricular activities “remain elusive.” At the time, Diné College had just completed the first year of a four-year HLC Assessment Academy, and it had not yet had sufficient time to accumulate enough year-after-year data outcomes to be predictive.

Action Plan: The HLC directed the college to create and refine Student Learning Outcomes for the General Education programs, and to review the efficacy of all curricular and co-curricular programs, especially in terms of Student Learning Outcomes.

Discussion: As stated above, Diné College is still developing an assessment plan that meets the unique needs of the college and provides meaningful data. In the last six months, the college has created SLO’s for the General Education Program, and it is in the process of revising those SLO’s for simplified and uniform assessment activities across the four schools.

In November and December 2022, Diné College engaged in a college-wide effort to inventory and analyze artifacts collected over the previous five years. This was the first concerted effort in the past decade to conduct a college-wide assessment of the General Education program. Preliminary analysis of the data reveals a hit-or-miss style of artifact collection. Artifacts were categorized according to the six disciplines: Communications, Humanities & Fine Arts, Mathematics, Social & Behavioral Sciences, Laboratory Science, and Diné Studies. The most uniform data was submitted during the 2016-17 academic year, but assessment efforts slacked off in the following years.



It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and other issues effectively halted assessment activities for two years, during which the entire college community went into a survival mode and did very little in terms of artifact collection or assessment.

To reiterate what was stated above, Diné College appointed a new chair for the GenEd Committee in the fall of 2022. It also reopened its campuses to full capacity after being closed or limited-capacity for more than two years during the COVID-19 pandemic. The GenEd Committee—and Diné College—is committed to re-examining existing assessment processes and revising them as need. It is also committee to General Education assessment in the long-term, which will require new energy, stronger teamwork, and mutual support.

3. The institution uses the information gained from assessment to improve student learning.

Background: In the 2018 report, the HLC found that Diné College employees were passionate about data collection and analysis, and that they were excited about becoming a data-driven institution. However, the report also found that Diné College was not closing the assessment loop by unifying the process and assessment outcomes.

Action Plan: The HLC directed the college to provide evidence of year-after-year monitoring of Student Learning Outcomes, and of closing the loop in ways that inform efforts to improve student learning.

Discussion: At the time of the last report, the college had just hired a director of assessment, whose job was coordinating and unifying the assessment processes through centralization of student learning assessment activities. For several years now, the college has lacked a director of assessment and, as stated above, it no longer has an Office of Academic Assessment. Diné College recently hired an assessment data specialist, and it is continually advertising for the position of assessment director.

Additionally, Diné College has an Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting, which has been instrumental in data collection, analysis, and reporting. Such data is published on the college's shared drive and is available for review by deans, administrators, key faculty, and the Board of Regents.

As the GenEd Committee works to develop a uniform assessment process and train faculty and staff about yearly expectations, it anticipates working with the Office of Institutional Planning and Reporting, the assessment data specialist, and key members of the administration to coordinate artifact collection and assessment activities, and then produce an annual report that includes data analysis as well as specific recommendations for the improvement of student learning.

4. The institution's processes and methodologies to assess student learning reflect good practice, including the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Background: In its 2018 report, the HLC found that faculty were passionate about assessment, but that the assessment program needed to be reconceptualized to be more transparent and encourage greater buy-in from faculty and staff. The report identified some issues with artifact collection, including the fact that artifacts were stored in a shared drive that is not open to most faculty, and that review of artifacts sometimes revealed that particular assignments were not appropriate for assessment and were therefore dropped.

Action Plan: The HLC directed the college to collect year-after-year data that affords longitudinal data analysis, and that the processes and methodologies used include the substantial participation of faculty and other instructional staff members.

Discussion: As stated above, artifact collection has been haphazard during the past five years (and likely many years before that). While faculty buy-in has consistently been an issue in data collection, the GenEd Committee believes that before a college asks for buy-in from faculty and staff, it must produce a simple, transparent process of assessment.

As it develops a new process and handbook, the GenEd Committee is considering the following measures to ensure a simpler, more transparent process and greater faculty buy-in:

1. Simplified Student Learning Outcomes that are consistent with other institutions' outcomes and are easily measurable in a variety of courses in the General Education Core. For example, the SLO "write clearly" can be assessed in GenEd courses in English, Humanities, Social Sciences, and Diné Studies.
2. Adoption of rubrics that allow assessment teams to uniformly assess SLO's in courses across the Gen Ed Core. The GenEd Committee has made the VALUE Rubrics available to deans and faculty; it recommends that faculty teaching Gen Ed Core courses modify the rubrics as needed.
3. Development of a simple, uniform assessment cycle, which includes mandatory assessment days at the end of every semester (already incorporated in Diné College's academic calendar) during which faculty groups complete assessment activities.
4. Development of a council or other entity that meets annually, after spring semester, to analyze assessment data and produce a yearly report.
5. Revitalization of the assessment process, which could include mandatory "week zero" meetings to jump-start assessment before every semester. There needs to be a shift from lackluster participation in collecting data to broad participation with true buy-in to a system of quality improvement.
6. Remind faculty that assessment data is non-punitive, and that they are contractually obligated to collect and assess artifacts.

APPENDIX A

General Education Committee 2022/2023

Composition	Membership
Faculty – SAHE	Alysa Landry X
Faculty – SAHE	Herman Peterson X
Faculty – SAHE	Shaina Nez X
Faculty – SDSE	
Faculty – SDSE	OJ Vecenti
Faculty – STEM	Paul Arbetan X
Faculty – STEM	Christopher Dickerson X
Faculty – SBSS	Milton Bluehouse
Faculty – SBSS	Jeremiah Barber X
Office of Registrar Representative	

Meeting Agenda

8 a.m., Friday, January 27, 2023

Zoom: <https://dinecollege.zoom.us/j/92843949227>

- I. **Call to Order:** 8:09 a.m.
- II. **Approval of Agenda** Christopher moves; Shaina seconds; unanimous approval
- III. **Approval of Minutes** (Dec. 2 meeting; Dec. 14 work session; Dec. 21 special meeting)
Christopher moves to approve minutes of all three meetings; Paul seconds; unanimous approval
- IV. **Updates & Reports**
 - a. Update on Religion courses in Humanities program
 - b. Compensation for Dec. 14 work session (Alysa)
- V. **New Business**
 - a. **Discussion and Possible Action:** Approve the finalized General Education Assessment Handbook OJ moves to approve the document, with minor edits; Christopher seconds; unanimous approval
 - b. **Discussion:** The provost has asked for the revised handbook ASAP. What's our plan of action? Committee will work on revisions during next regularly scheduled meetings.
- VI. **Adjourn:** 8:47 a.m.; OJ moves; Paul seconds; unanimous approval

APPENDIX B

General Education – Student Learning Outcomes

Communications (n1): Students will write essays that provide evidence of critical thinking and appropriate use of research techniques.

Humanities & Fine Arts (n2): Students will demonstrate the ability and curiosity to develop a deeper understanding of the breadth of human experience and the uniqueness of Diné wisdom [as expressed through the arts and humanities] through writing, research, critical inquiry, and creative production.

Mathematics (n3): Students will learn quantitative reasoning while self-directing learning of standard college level mathematical concepts.

Social & Behavioral Sciences (n4): At the end of the course, students will be able to conduct critical inquiry.

Laboratory Science (n5): Students will demonstrate an understanding of the scientific method by applying it in an experiment and written up in a lab report.

Diné Studies (n6): For language courses, students will express k'é relationship through written and oral communication; for culture courses, students will explain the importance of Diné self-awareness.