# 2013 General Education Annual Assessment Report

This form is intended to facilitate reporting program assessment to accrediting agencies, Board of Trustees, Strategic Planning Committee, and other internal or external audiences.

The department mission statement, Program Learning Outcomes (PLO’s), curricular map and multi-year action plan should to be posted on the departmental website.

Program: General Education  
Date: October 11, 2013  
Committee Chair: John Blondell (current General Education Committee Chair), Tatiana Nazarenko (2012-2013 Chair)

## I. Program Learning Outcome (PLO) assessment

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<tr>
<th>Program Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Westmont student will demonstrate literacy in Christian scripture and Christian doctrine</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is in Charge</td>
<td>Tatiana Nazarenko, Telford Work (Lead Assessment Specialist for Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections), Assessment Team (Russ Howell, Maurice Lee, and Tim Wilson), and General Education Committee (John Blondell, Michelle Hardley, Wayne Iba, Thomas Jayawardene, and Debra Quast)</td>
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### Direct Assessment Methods

On April 5, 2013, one month before graduation, Assessment Team organized a survey of graduating seniors. Of the 305 graduating seniors, 76 participated, for a 25% response rate. After gathering at a special event to take the survey, the student had the opportunity to review and discuss the results (Appendix A). After this special event, 25 of these seniors attended one of five focus groups hosted by faculty or staff members. They wrote brief responses to any one of several theological questions, and then answered several questions orally (Appendix B).

Whenever possible, the survey results (Appendix C) were triangulated with the results of the “Christian Life Survey” (Appendix D) coordinated through the Center for Scripture Engagement at Taylor University. Westmont’s student body participated in this survey together with 12 other schools (Appendix F). Of our student body population size of 1,262 students, 502 students participated in the survey from across the classes of 2013-2016, for a 40% response rate.
Major Findings

Major findings include:

- Westmont seniors are low to medium in biblical literacy. Students are somewhat familiar with Christian scripture, especially scripture passages that circulate most widely in churches and popular cultural consciousness. Some students attain higher biblical proficiency; however, there is a widespread and apparently well-founded sense that current students are much less biblically literate than students were two generations or even one generation ago.

- Students are low to medium in hermeneutical and theological proficiency, again concentrated on those theological claims and biblical interpretations that are most prominent in evangelical tradition and wider culture as a whole. Some students attain a much higher level of sophistication, while at the other end of the spectrum, others show a worrisome lack of sound theological judgment and knowledge.

- Students have demonstrated improvement on all these measures as they progress through their years at Westmont. Students demonstrate advances in knowledge, literacy, proficiency, and commitment, and nearly all of them credit Westmont as contributing to that growth. Nevertheless, they lack the confidence in biblical and theological knowledge that would best encourage them to grow through practice.

Closing the Loop Activities

The assessment results were presented to the faculty and staff at the Faculty Forum and Provost’s Forum in Fall 2013. The input was collected and passed along with the Christian Understanding, Practices, and Affections recommendations to the Academic Senate, which is in the process of developing recommendations for closing the loop.

Discussion

The distance between expectations of the document “What Do We Want from Our Graduates?” and our results begs the question of whether advanced literacy and proficiency are realistic given students’ prior exposure on arrival. An academic curriculum has to build on what students have already gained from church, family, and independent study. However, there seems to be no additional room in the General Education curriculum for additional biblical coursework. A campus-wide conversation is in order regarding Westmont’s goals for its graduates. It may involve revising “What Do We Want from Our Graduates?” document in light of this year’s work.
## II. Follow-up project # 1.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Program Learning Outcome</th>
<th>Westmont students will communicate in written form for a variety of purposes and audiences across the curriculum</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Who is in Charge</td>
<td>Tatiana Nazarenko, Sarah Skripsky (Lead Assessment Specialist for Written Communication), and the General Education Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major Findings</td>
<td>The Spring 2013 assessment results suggest that even Westmont’s best graduates are strongest in the criterion of style and somewhat weaker in the criteria of rhetorical sensitivity and mobility. These results, though limited, resonate with findings from spring 2011 indirect assessments conducted by Lead Assessment Specialist and documented in the 2011 GE Annual Assessment Update report, as well as in recent Writing Center data, and suggest that both faculty and students perceive style to be a significant component of writing. In contrast, the higher-order thinking required for rhetorical sensitivity and mobility (i.e., writing for “a variety of purposes and audiences” in keeping with the GE SLO) is a relative weakness in student performance, even among our most acclaimed graduates. Faculty may privilege style in instruction and response practices since style is an area in which it is possible to provide quick, decisive critique. However, these assessment results suggest that, like many institutions with Writing Across the Curriculum programs, Westmont challenge in General Education in Written Communication is to produce writers who are not only adept stylists but who are also sharp and flexible thinkers and communicators. According to the Lead Assessment Specialist’s opinion, for students to succeed in achieving our GE SLO for writing (and to be prepared for writing beyond Westmont), such instruction in rhetorical sensitivity and mobility should be introduced robustly in ENG-002 (when required) and should be supported and developed in additional Writing-Intensive courses.</td>
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<td>Closing the Loop Activities</td>
<td>1. Restructuring the GE curriculum. Having discussed the high-priority recommendations developed by the Lead Assessment Specialist for Written Communication, the GE Committee is proposing the development of the first year seminar. The GE Committee proposal was submitted to the Academic Senate on January 25, 2013; the revised version of the proposal with the stronger emphasis on the first year seminar was submitted on April 10, 2013. The proposal was considered; the First Year Seminar Task Force was formed and met two times during the Summer of 2013. Currently, the Academic Senate is considering the Westmont first-year experience pilot, which will be offered in Fall 2014. 2. Yet another approach to addressing student deficiencies in written communication outlined in the Writing Across the Curriculum report could be introduced by raising the SAT/ACT score bar from 580/28 to 650/30 scores. Westmont current passing scores, 580 on the SAT and 28 on the ACT are low. Since 58% of student population are scored at 580 on SAT but 25% of students are scored at 650, three additional sections of ENG-002 will be required to offer every academic year. This</td>
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The approach has apparent staffing implications, hiring adjuncts to teach additional sections of ENG-002 without providing the opportunity for students to experience a more integrated learning within the GE curriculum.

The GE Committee proposal was submitted on October 25, 2012 and was declined by the Academic Senate.

**Discussion**

It was evident in the course of the 2011-2012 assessment that using incentives to encourage students to submit their writing portfolios has proved to be an ineffective method of data collection. The incentive was insignificant for the amount of work required from students. Additionally, the submission process itself may have been perceived as too difficult or time-consuming and the announcement sounded like a contest.

In terms of data collection it would be more effective to introduce either of the following collection methods:

a. Randomly select qualified seniors and request their works from faculty supervising their senior projects.

b. Do a stratified random sample to ensure that a representative sample of each department's students is collected and submitted to the Dean of Curriculum and Educational Effectiveness. Again, faculty will be notified which students' work to submit for assessment.

c. Introduce an e-portfolio graduation requirement for Westmont students. In these portfolios, students will provide evidence of mastering all institutional learning outcomes assessed at the GE level and beyond, as well major program outcomes. Most students are reluctant to participate in optional projects; however, a requirement to complete the project and intrinsic motivation are the two factors that will bring seniors to perform at their best. The introduction of an e-portfolio requirement will preclude future Lead Assessment Specialists from spending time unproductively by sending numerous reminders to students qualified for participation in e-portfolio assessment. However, the introduction of this requirement will also necessitate a subscription to a web-based Accountability Management System.

Further discussion on this matter is required.

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**III. Follow-up project # 2.**

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<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Reorganization of the GE Website documents</th>
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<td><strong>Who is in Charge</strong></td>
<td>Wayne Iba, Tatiana Nazarenko, and Debora Quast in collaboration with Brittany Myles</td>
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<td><strong>Major Findings</strong></td>
<td>General Education documents are spread over four different locations on the Westmont website, with significant overlap, duplication and occasional contradiction.</td>
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<td><strong>Action</strong></td>
<td>The GE Committee proposed that all GE documents be consolidated in one folder directly under ‘Academics’ and that two entry pages – one for students and another for faculty and staff – should be created (Appendix G).</td>
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<td><strong>Discussion</strong></td>
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IV. Adjustments to the Multi-year Action Plan

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<th>Proposed adjustment</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
<th>Timing</th>
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<tr>
<td>The proposed adjustment to the GE Multi-Year Action Plan will be discussed in the 2014 Annual Assessment Report. The most current version of the plan is posted on the <a href="#">Educational Effectiveness website</a></td>
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V. Appendices (attached in the 2013 GE Annual Assessment Update Report Appendices folder)

A. Senior Instant Survey Questions
B. Focus Group Questions
C. Senior Survey Results
D. Christian Life Survey Questions
E. Christian Life Survey Results
F. List of the schools participating in the Christian Life Survey
G. Reorganization of the GE Website Proposal