GE Information Competency and Technology Literacy SLO
Spring 2019 Assessment Narrative
By the Riverside Assessment Committee

Introduction

According to the Riverside City College catalog, the awarding of an associate degree is intended to represent more than just an accumulation of units. The associate degree says that recipients have taken coursework in broad areas of study including the sciences, mathematics, and humanities which have allowed them to develop certain capabilities including the ability to communicate clearly and to think critically. Moreover, recipients of the associate degree will be able to demonstrate those capabilities in courses that allow for the introduction, development, and, in some cases, mastery of said skills.

To this end, the College has four general education student learning outcomes (GE SLOs) that are assessed to measure to what extent (1) the courses identified as GE courses encourage the development of these capabilities, and (2) the students passing these courses have, indeed, developed the capabilities.

Information competency and technology literacy are primary skills that those earning an associate degree from RCC should possess. The GE outcome in information competency and technology literacy reads as follows:

> Students will be able to use technology to locate, organize, and evaluate information. They will be able to locate relevant information, judge the reliability of sources, and evaluate the evidence contained in those sources as they construct arguments, make decisions, and solve problems.

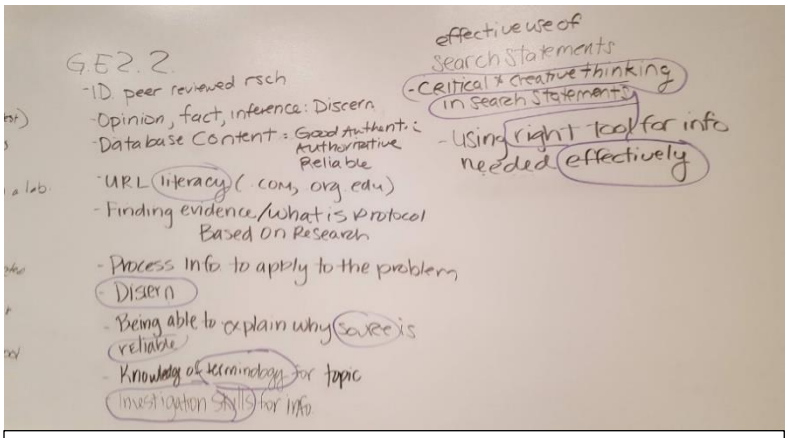
Assessment Project and Instrument

In Spring 2019, the Riverside Assessment Committee (RAC) did a direct assessment of student work in four content areas using the attached rubric, which divided the GE SLO into two parts. The courses were chosen to include student work from different divisions across the college.

The four content areas and assignments were as follows:

1. A quiz on internet research from CIS-1A (Introduction to Computer Information Systems).
2. An outline and video recording of an informative cultural speech from Comm-1 (Public Speaking).
3. A lab assignment on statistical tests from PSY-50 (Research Methods in Psychology).
4. Common final from two sections of LIB-1 (Introduction to Information Literacy).

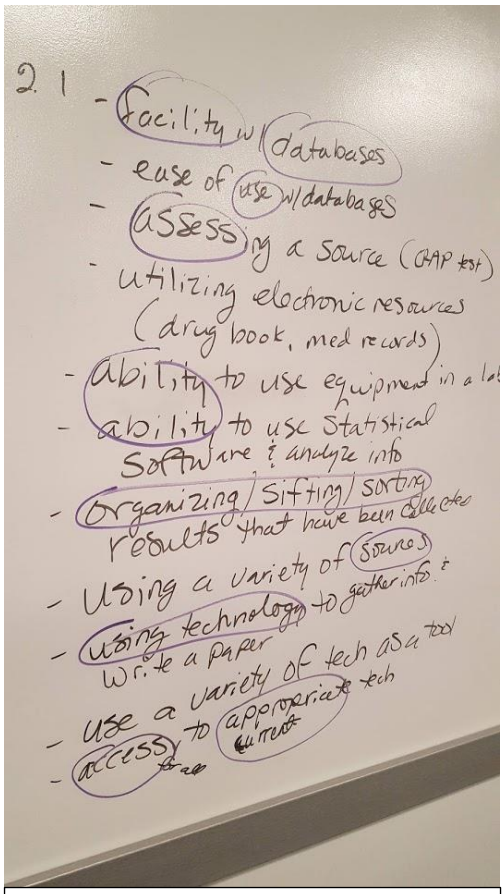
Those who participated in the assessment and rubric scoring were provided with the assignment for reference only but were instructed not to grade the student work. The members were told instead to evaluate the student work for the assignments' ability to allow the students to demonstrate information competency and technology literacy in conjunction with the assignment. In other words, the



Group norming of GE SLO 2.2

participants were advised to look at the assignment and see what the students were being asked to do and then to determine to what degree the student demonstrated information competency and technology literacy as described in the GE SLO.

As part of the important conversation about expectations and the purpose of assessment, those who participated in the scoring spent time norming the two subsections of the rubric before beginning the analysis of the student artifacts. As a whole group, we developed a common vocabulary of words and phrases to discuss information competency and technology literacy, specifically what these broad terms mean, what the component parts of information competency and technology literacy are, and what this might look like in various assignments and student work.



Group norming of GE SLO 2.1

We were hoping to learn primarily to what degree our students were able to demonstrate information competency and technology literacy upon completion of courses mapped to this GE SLO. Secondarily, we knew that we would also be evaluating the assignments, and whether the assignment in courses mapped to this GE SLO were allowing students approach, meet, or exceed the standards set forth in the rubric.

<u>Results</u>

Results of each group's assessment of the artifacts are shown below:

CIS-1A*					
GE 2.1 Students will be able to use technology to locate, organize, and evaluate information.	Exceeds	Meets X	Approaches	Does Not Meet	N/A
GE 2.2 Students will be able to locate relevant information, judge the reliability of sources, and evaluate the evidence contained in those sources as they construct arguments, make decisions, and solve problems.					

*The group did not finish scoring both subsections in the time allotted.

Comm-1					
GE 2.1 Students will be able to use technology to locate, organize, and evaluate information.	Exceeds	Meets X	Approaches	Does Not Meet	N/A
GE 2.2 Students will be able to locate relevant information, judge the reliability of sources, and evaluate the evidence contained in those sources as they construct arguments, make decisions, and solve problems.			X		

PSY-50					
GE 2.1 Students will be able to use technology to locate, organize, and evaluate information.	Exceeds	Meets X	Approaches	Does Not Meet	N/A
GE 2.2 Students will be able to locate relevant information, judge the reliability of sources, and evaluate the evidence contained in those sources as they construct arguments, make decisions, and solve problems.		X			

LIB-1					
GE 2.1 Students will be able to use technology to locate, organize, and evaluate information.	Exceeds	Meets X	Approaches	Does Not Meet	N/A
GE 2.2 Students will be able to locate relevant information, judge the reliability of sources, and evaluate the evidence contained in those sources as they construct arguments, make decisions, and solve problems.			X		

Analysis

Overall, the scoring of this GE SLO went much more smoothly than the scoring of the critical thinking GE SLO, which was completed in Fall 2018. This seems to have been the case for two reasons. First, many of the participants this time also participated in the scoring in the fall, so they were more experienced in the language of the SLOs, the process of GE assessment, and the expectations of the activity. Second, and more important, was the fact that we spent time norming as a whole group before breaking up into smaller groups to work with individual artifacts. This part of the activity seemed to be especially helpful for all involved, not just for this particular activity, but as a model for the kinds of norming that everyone can do when they go back to their respective disciplines. The photos above show the work that was done defining the subsections of the SLO and then choosing key terms (circled in purple in the photos) to help those doing the scoring.

The conclusions of the groups seemed to center around the assignments. Ultimately, if the assignments do not encourage the students to do the kinds of activities called for in the SLO, then the students are not likely to meet or exceed the standards. This seemed to be the reason for the CIS group being unable to score subsection 2.2 and for the "approaches" rating on the Comm-1 artifacts.

Faculty members working alongside a student to assess GE SLO

For example, the group scoring the CIS artifacts commented that, in at least one of the quiz questions, the correct and incorrect answer choices were worded so similarly as to be interchangeable in meaning, which would have prevented the students from properly evaluating information to make decisions.

The group scoring the Comm-1 artifacts similarly found issues with the assignment. They wrote that, while the "assignment nicely lays out organizational patterns," it was "not clear that assignment fosters constructing arguments." Ultimately, this group determined that the

assignment seemed to encourage the student to be biased and NOT use appropriate sources, almost the opposite of what this GE SLO requires. The group came to this conclusion that it was assignment design that encouraged this result. The assignment was asking the students to select a misconception about their own culture and then inform the audience about this misconception. As a result, the students were finding sources that potentially reinforced their own perspective rather than locating sources that provided an alternative perspective.

Even the group reviewing the PSY-50 artifacts spent a fair amount of time discussing the assignment with regards to subsection 2.2. They wrote that, though the assignment required the students to evaluate the information, the students were not required to locate or judge the reliability of the information; they were provided the information by the instructor.

In the end, the consensus seemed to be that we as instructors need to go one step further in our questioning of students. We may tell them what sources to use, or which ones are good ones, but we should be asking them WHY: WHY did we choose one source over another or WHY is source X preferred. In other words, we need to spend more time discussing and helping students to think critically about sources while teaching them to use said sources so that, when they leave RCC, they can both choose appropriate sources and use those sources to get just the right information. To use the terminology developed by the groups during our norming session earlier, the groups discussed the need to teach students the appropriate investigative, creative, and critical thinking skills so that they can use technology to organize, sift, and sort sources and ultimately get to the answers they are seeking.

It should be noted that teaching and assessing the ability to choose and use appropriate sources may be occurring within the classroom; however, the artifacts we looked at may not have demonstrated this overall since these artifacts are just one snapshot of a whole semester's worth of assignments and instruction.

Future Implications and Recommendations

Based on this assessment and its focus on the quality of assignments, the RAC recommends workshops put on with help from Faculty Development to assist instructors with developing more successful assignments. One idea is to do this by division with instructors from several disciplines in a division on hand to share assignments or to collaborate with colleagues to create effective assignments. Having the GE SLOs on hand for these collaborative sessions along with the SLOs for the courses could help faculty be sure that they are crafting assignments that speak to both.

Another recommendation the RAC has is, when assessing future GE SLOs, to try to capture more of the pedagogical process from those who provide artifacts by asking instructors to provide information about what instructional strategies have been used to get students to the assignment. This way the reviewers of artifacts will have not just the assignment language and the student work but also a clearer

understanding of the instruction that lead up to the assignment. Ultimately, the hope is that this will lead to a fuller picture of how the GE SLO is incorporated into the learning process and the outcome of that process.

Conclusion

It is interesting to see how, so far, both the critical thinking SLO and the information competency and technology literacy SLO are connected. The groups in their work discovered that students can't have information competency and technology literacy without a dose of critical thinking, and that being a critical and creative thinker will help a student be more competent and literate with technology. As instructors, we need to see this connection and design our instruction and assignments so that students have the opportunity to practice both at the same time, knowing that the two SLOs enhance each other.