

## Response to the CSCU System Office Memo

### "CCSU [CSCU] Assessment Initiative: A CSCU Assessment Council Activity"

On September 21, 2017, Mr. Arthur Poole from the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities System (CSCU) Office issued a draft memo outlining system-wide assessment initiative for the CSCU system (Appendix A; note, **the proposal was incorrectly titled "CCSU Assessment Initiative" and should have been titled "CSCU Assessment Initiative"**). The proposed method is very similar to the Multi-State Collaborative, which Central Connecticut State University (CCSU) has been piloting since 2014. In consultation with the CCSU Faculty Senate, CCSU's Academic Assessment Committee (AAC) presents the following response to the CSCU Assessment Initiative memo.

#### 1. Model for the Assessment of General Education Student Learning Outcomes

CCSU Response: We have found that the MSC-model for campus-based assessment produces data that are both reliable and useful. The MSC-Model, using VALUE rubrics, has been piloted at CCSU for the purposes of Gen Ed Learning Outcomes assessment since 2014, with [Faculty Senate](#) approval. Faculty voluntarily participate in this model. The campus-based use of the MSC-model has been highlighted in national publications and conferences. The process itself provides benchmark information on scores, disaggregated by student level and institutional level, from MSC participating institutions. At CCSU, we have taken this model one step further by having CCSU faculty score de-identified artifacts from CCSU students; this additional step has been indispensable in that it is CCSU faculty who will be designing and implementing any curriculum refinements based on the data. In addition, it is also vital that any assessment system remain flexible, as part of every assessment cycle is the evaluation of the assessment method itself. Faculty must, for instance, be able to select assessment rubrics and other means by which they can best assess their students' work.

#### 2. Proposed General Education Assessment Schedule

CCSU Response: Since 2014, CCSU has established an effective timeline by which the university's Learning Outcomes, namely Critical Thinking (CT), Written Communication (WC), Quantitative Literacy (QL), Information Literacy (IL), and Civic Engagement (CE), have been or will be assessed. A projected assessment cycle timeline continues the assessment of three General Education dimensions, namely CT, WC, and QL, every other year. The AAC feels that, while all learning outcomes are important, these three learning outcomes are critical, and transcend all programs and disciplines. The assessment of remaining learning outcomes are proposed in the intervening years. (See Appendix B for a proposed Learning Outcomes Assessment Timeline and a crosswalk linking NEASC Academic Program standards with VALUE and TAP rubrics and CCSU GenEd Learning Objectives/Outcomes.)

CCSU's AAC is responsible for coordinating the campus GenEd assessment initiatives. Since 2014, the AAC has carefully reviewed timelines for our MSC implementation, and faculty across all schools have voluntarily provided feedback. Faculty have provided suggestions for the sequence in which our Learning Outcomes should be assessed.

3. Establishment of Institutional Standards

CCSU Response: The CSCU memo defines the System's "aspirational expectations for student accomplishments as yardsticks of educational effectiveness and quality." Sample paradigms are prescribed in the memo, including the example of an Institutional Standard of 3.5+ for Written Communication for advanced level students (students with 100+ credits). National scores from the 2016-2017 academic year show that senior-level students' scores range between 1.5 and 2.3 depending on the rubric (i.e., Critical Thinking, Written Communication, and Quantitative Literacy). The members of the CCSU AAC urge that before aspirational scores are chosen that they be grounded on and set into the context of existing national student outcomes so that they are achievable aspirations.

4. A Systematic Construct for the Assessment of Student Learning Outcomes

CCSU Response: Over the past three years, CCSU faculty from all schools have voluntarily participated in the MSC initiative. The results of the three-year pilot have resulted in data that are clear and reliable. We have identified our students' strengths and weaknesses in specific areas. These data should prove valuable as faculty consider how they might utilize their students' learning outcomes to adjust teaching and learning, as needed, in the future.

Therefore, the AAC recommends that the CCSU Faculty Senate vote to continue the MSC-model - as tailored to CCSU's academic environment - to institutionally assess CCSU's GenEd Learning Outcomes, following the AAC recommended assessment schedule and proposed rubrics, rather than the System's proposed assessment initiative. Once the CSCU initiative is finalized, CCSU will certainly consider participation or assisting with the initiative. As we have made significant progress on assessment and have already implemented this type of model for assessment on our campus, CCSU might be well positioned to provide valuable guidance.

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Participating CSCU institutions will agree to assess student learning outcomes to determine the degree to which students acquire collegiate-level skills and knowledge within the 11 General Education (GE) competencies, prescribed by the New England Association of Schools and Colleges (NEASC) – the regional accreditation agency. In compliance with the Board of Regents for Higher Education’s Academic Program Review Policy, each competency must be assessed at least once in each seven-year cycle. However, it might be more advantageous to follow the NEASC five-year reporting interval. To advance organizational learning and in continuance of the System’s participation in the Multi-State Collaborative to Advance Quality Student Learning (MSC), at least one of its core competencies shall be included each year in the list of competencies to be collaboratively assessed by the CSCU Assessment Initiative. The MSC core competencies are: Critical Thinking, Quantitative Literacy and Written Communication. Accordingly, the systemic construct of the CSCU Assessment Initiative will include MSC features and; particularly its usage of the Association of American Association of Colleges & Universities’ Essential Learning Outcomes and VALUE rubrics and Taskstream-Tk20’s software applications and professional development activities. Consequently, this initiative will benefit from the lessons learned and the currency of MSC, which have occurred in part from the System’s participation.

The participating CSCU institutions will collectively construct the Initiative’s assessment schedule in the manner of the following illustration:

<b>CSCU Assessment Initiative: General Education Assessment Schedule</b>			
<b>Assessment Period</b>	<b>General Education Competency</b>		
Year 1: 2017-18	Written Communication	Aesthetic Dimensions	Continuing Learning/ Information Literacy
Year 2: 2018-19	Quantitative Literacy	Social Phenomena	Historical Knowledge
Year 3: 2019-20	Critical Thinking	Scientific Knowledge & Understanding	Oral Communications
Year 4: 2020-21	Written Communication	Ethics	Scientific Reasoning
Year 5: 2021-22	Quantitative Literacy	Historical Knowledge	Aesthetic Dimensions
Year 6: 2022-23	Critical Thinking	Continuing Learning/ Information Literacy	Scientific Knowledge & Understanding
Year 7: 2023-24	Written Communication	Scientific Reasoning	Social Phenomena

Within the Initiative’s systemic construct, from the perspective of the System Office, it is appropriate that GE assessment should minimally occur at both the foundational and advanced levels – at junctures near the completion of students’ journey toward an associate or a baccalaureate degree. It would be fitting for four-year institutions to assess GE at both junctures.

**NOTE:** It would also be informative for the community colleges to assess GE competencies at two junctures; perhaps at the end of foundational course(s) and near degree completion.

While the individual CSCU institutions are free to set their own institutional standards for student achievements within the GE competencies, the System should also define its aspirational expectations for student accomplishment as yardsticks of educational effectiveness and quality. Such a paradigm is illustrated below:

Competency	Institutional Standard	System’s Expectation
Written Communication ( <u>foundational level</u> )	At Saugatuck River Community College, students projected to have completed at least 50 course credits toward a degree by the end of the 2018 Spring Semester shall demonstrate <u>proficiency</u> in the referenced General Education competency through achieving an average score of 2.0+ on an authentic artifact, assessed by a three-member panel of certified scorers utilizing the VALUE rubrics.	At CSCU institutions, at least 75 percent of designated students shall demonstrate <u>proficiency</u> in the referenced General Education competency as defined by its Institutional Standard.
Written Communication ( <u>in-depth or advanced level</u> )	At Northern Connecticut State University, students projected to have completed at least 100 course credits toward a baccalaureate degree by the end of the 2018 Spring Semester shall demonstrate <u>mastery</u> in the referenced General Education competency through achieving an average score of 3.5+ on an authentic artifact, assessed by a three-member panel of certified scorers utilizing the VALUE rubrics.	At CSCU institutions at least 75 percent of designated students shall demonstrate <u>mastery</u> in the referenced General Education competency as defined by its Institutional Standard.

CSCU institutions are empowered to elect not to participate in the CSCU Assessment Initiative or to participate partially to varying extents. Full participation would afford the participating institutions to collaboratively fashion a systematic construct for the expressed purpose:

***to document, report and utilize student learning outcomes  
to improve the quality of teaching and learning***

Of course, partial and non-participants must pursue the same objectives but would not do so as a prescribed cooperative. Nevertheless, the CSCU Assessment Initiative will not be restrictive. A full participant might decide to undertake assessment of all three MSC core competencies each year. A partial participant might elect to follow the Initiative’s assessment schedule but employ other assessment strategies. Another institution might elect to participate in MSC without engagement with the System’s assessment software activities. It is also instructive to note that there are a number of valid ways in which institutions might designate student populations to be assessed.

Participants and non-participants alike constitute the System's assessment learning community – faculty and staff from the institutions should resolutely seek ways in which they learn from each other. To that end, the CSU Assessment Initiative will welcome non-participants to actively participate in and contribute to its professional development, informational and other activities.

**Appendix B – CCSU Proposed Rubrics\* and Assessment Cycle for GenEd**

<u>NEASC Requirement – 4.15</u>	<u>VALUE Rubric</u>	<u>TAP Rubric</u>	<u>CCSU GenEd LO</u>	Year Assessed
Written Communication	Written Communication		5	1, 3, 5
Oral Communication	Oral Communication		5	6
Quantitative Reasoning	Quantitative Literacy		6	1, 3, 5
Scientific Reasoning	Inquiry & Analysis	Yes	3	4
Scientific Understanding & Knowledge		Yes	3	6
Critical Analysis	Critical Thinking		4	1, 3, 5
Logical Thinking				
Information Literacy	Information Literacy		7	2
Historical Understanding & Knowledge		Yes	2	4
Social Phenomena Understanding & Knowledge	Civic Engagement		10	2
Aesthetic Appreciation & Knowledge	Creative Thinking	Aesthetic Dimensions	1	2
Ethical Dimensions of Humankind	Ethical Reasoning		9	4

\*Final rubric selections will be made after further consultation with faculty from content areas.

Year	Learning Outcome Assessed		
1	Written Communication	Quantitative Reasoning	Critical Thinking
2	Civic Engagement	Information Literacy	Aesthetic Appreciation
3	Written Communication	Quantitative Reasoning	Critical Thinking
4	Ethical Dimensions	Historical Understanding	Scientific Reasoning
5	Written Communication	Quantitative Reasoning	Critical Thinking
6	Oral Communication	Scientific Understanding	
1	Written Communication	Quantitative Reasoning	Critical Thinking
2	Civic Engagement	Information Literacy	Aesthetic Appreciation
3	Written Communication	Quantitative Reasoning	Critical Thinking
4	Ethical Dimensions	Historical Understanding	Scientific Reasoning
5	Written Communication	Quantitative Reasoning	Critical Thinking
6	Oral Communication	Scientific Understanding	