

2022 -2023

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT



SCHEV General
Education Assessment
Report

The Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness

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INTRODUCTION

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) adopted the Policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education on July 18, 2017¹. It mandates that each institution assess student achievement in at least six competency areas, representing several different types of knowledge and skills. All institutions will assess four core competencies.

1. Critical Thinking
2. Writing Communication
3. Quantitative Reasoning
4. Civic Engagement

The institutions themselves will select two competencies. Virginia State University (VSU) has identified two reflecting their institutional student learning priorities. The faculty chose the competencies listed below from the General Education-SCHEV survey administered on April 19, 2018.

5. Global Cultural Literacy
6. Scientific Literacy

Virginia State University will assess the competencies through the general education curriculum. Therefore, as directed by SCHEV, expectations for achievement in all six competencies shall be articulated as institution-level outcomes.

Virginia State University assessment will rely on faculty-driven assessment practices. The General Education Assessment of Student Learning Committee will oversee the assessment process. The committee consists of five members serving as representatives for their assigned competency team. Membership of the competency teams will reflect the General Education program and academic departments that will be assessed. Table 1 includes the faculty members and departments they represent that served on the Global Cultural Literacy and Civic Engagement committee for the 2023-2024 academic year. The teams are responsible for guiding the policies, processes, and procedures related to the assessment of student learning.

Table 1

General Education Assessment of Student Learning Committee
Global Cultural Literacy and Civic Engagement

Department of Languages and Literature	Dr. Deanna Mihaly
Department of History and Philosophy	Dr. Richard Chew
Department of Art and Design	Dr. Andrew Norris
Department of Music	Dr. Lamon Lawhorn
Department of Health Physical Education and Recreation	Professor Simin Eslamian

¹ State Council of Higher Education For Virginia. Policy on Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education. Richmond: SCHEV, 2017. Digital

This report documents civic engagement assessment from face-to-face courses within the general education curriculum. This report is one of two completed competency assessment reports for the 2022-2023 assessment cycle.

GENERAL EDUCATION ASSESSMENT SCHEDULE

Virginia State University will follow the schedule outlined below, see Table 2, to report how we assess student learning outcomes in the six competency areas within six years. Two competencies will be evaluated formally each year. The data will be collected through embedded course assessment during the fall semesters of the year in which the two competencies will be measured.

Table 2
Data Collection Timeline

Cycle 1 Competencies Assessed			Cycle 2 Competencies Assessed		
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6
2020 – 2021	2021 – 2022	2022 – 2023	2023 – 2024	2024 – 2025	2025 – 2026
Critical Thinking	Scientific Literacy	Global Cultural Literacy	Critical Thinking	Scientific Literacy	Global Cultural Literacy
Written Communication	Quantitative Reasoning	Civic Engagement	Written Communication	Quantitative Reasoning	Civic Engagement

CONTINUOUS QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations from the previous assessment in June 2022 were used to inform this planning and assessment cycle for civic engagement. Table 3 displays the actions taken based on recommendations.

Table 3
June 2022 Civic Engagement Assessment Recommendations and Actions

Recommendations	Actions
Develop a strategy to expand assessment administration to 50% of courses and sections to increase the sample size.	Mapped General Education courses to the competencies and their associated SLOs to identify where learning objectives are addressed in the curriculum and to determine which courses will be assessed.

Improve data collection techniques.	Held virtual and in-person workshops to inform and train faculty on submitting their general education assessment data. Created a Step-By-Step Instruction manual. Created a Microsoft Forms assessment data collection portal for faculty to submit their course syllabus, assessment tool, and a copy of the student's work.
Increase communication between the departments and the general education assessment committee.	The General Education Director communicated with department chairs to inform them of the current status and pathway forward. Reorganized the General Education Assessment of Student Learning Committee into three subcommittees. Requested the 14 departments with a general education course to nominate a faculty member to serve.
Focused teaching on more challenging concepts	The SLOs were to be mapped to the courses by indicating if the course Introduces, Develops, or Reinforces. Departments were asked to indicate at what level the course is designed to address the outcome.
Disaggregate results by categories such as race, ethnicity, and First Generation for internal reporting	Students were disaggregated into the following categories: Colleges/Department/Majors/Transfer Status/Gender/race/ethnicity/First Generation for internal reporting.

Additional recommendations were provided by the general education assessment of student learning civic engagement and global cultural literacy committee. The first meeting asked faculty members to consider the following questions after reading the June 2022 report.

- Are these outcomes still relevant and appropriate for the General Education Curriculum?
- Are these the skills, knowledge, and abilities we want students to gain from the General Education curriculum?
 - What do we think VSU students should be exposed to?
- If not, what quality improvements should be made?

Table 4 displays the actions taken based on recommendations from the General Education Assessment of Student Learning Committee.

Table 4

Civic Engagement Assessment Recommendations and Actions

2023-2024 Recommendations	Actions
Revise the 11 civic engagement SLOs to be written in simple language.	The faculty members on the committee reviewed and updated the previous 11 SLOs to meet the following standards. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Begin with a Blooms taxonomy verb (exclude any introductory text)• Learning outcomes should be realistic and achievable• One verb per SLO• Each competency should have no more than four or five student learning outcomes.
Review and revise the AAC&U value rubric.	The faculty members on the committee reviewed and determined to modify the rubric. The value rubric was adapted to reflect the institution's assessment needs. The following changes were made: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The definition of civic engagement was changed to reflect VSU interpretation.• The scale level was changed to introduce, approach, meet standard, and exceed standard.• The scoring scale was expanded to include zero, indicating that the student did not demonstrate the learning outcome. Not applicable (N/A) was also added to indicate that the artifact was inappropriate for measuring the learning outcome.• The criteria were adjusted to align with VSU's general education SLOs.• The descriptors for standards of performance were updated or added as needed.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT DEFINITION AND LEARNING OUTCOMES



DEFINITION: Civic engagement is defined as an array of knowledge, abilities, values, attitudes, and behaviors that in combination, allow individuals to contribute to the civic life of their communities. It may include, among other things, exploration of one's role and responsibilities in society; knowledge of and ability to engage with political systems and processes; and/or course-based or extra-curricular efforts to identify and address issues of public or community concern, particularly as they address the African-American community.

INSTITUTION-LEVEL STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the General Education Program requirements, students will be able to:

1. **Describe** political systems and how they function.
2. **Articulate** their own civic identity and how one participates as an informed citizen in a democratic society.
3. **Propose** potential solutions to civic, social, environmental, historical, or economic challenges to meet community needs.
4. **Evaluate** the impacts of political or corporate policies on individuals, communities, and the environment.

COURSE PARTICIPATION

The assessment cycle for the 2022-2023 academic year included 13 courses eligible to be assessed for civic engagement. See Appendix A for a list of eligible courses. For assessment purposes, the courses were divided based on those that introduced and reinforced the SLOs. All eligible face-to-face courses offered during the assessment period were expected to participate. Of the 13 courses designated to participate, 92% submitted materials (Table 5). There were 63 course sections taught in the assessment period, with 44% who submitted student work samples.

Table 5

Course Participation in the 2022-2023 Assessment Period

	Introduced	Reinforced	Overall
Courses eligible to be assessed	13	0	13
Courses that participated	12 (92%)	0	12 (92%)
Sections of eligible courses to be assessed	63	0	63
Sections of eligible courses that participated	28 (44%)	0	28 (44%)

METHODOLOGY

Virginia State University uses course-embedded assessment to evaluate student learning within the General Education curriculum. The general education course map was reviewed to determine which courses to sample. See Appendix A for the VSU General Education Curriculum Map for Civic Engagement. Student work samples were requested from all face-to-face courses. Faculty were asked to submit data from the Fall 2022 semester. If the instructor only taught the course during the Spring 2023 semester, then data from this course would be used. Faculty were asked to select a random sample of students within the course. If teaching multiple sections of the same course, faculty were instructed to choose a random sample from each course, including no more than 20 from across all sections.

The faculty were required to submit the following documentation and data to the civic engagement Microsoft Forms assessment portal.

1. Course Syllabus
2. A summative assessment tool (instrument) that measures how students have achieved the critical thinking SLOs.
3. A clean, ungraded copy of the student's work. Group work was not accepted, only individual work that the student completed.

Departments and individual faculty members participated in in-person and virtual training sessions on the process and procedures of submitted data before the end of the academic year. The campaign to notify faculty members produced 152 student artifacts, 15% of the total enrollment from participating courses, see Table 6. Twenty-one course sections offered in the Fall 2022 submitted data, while seven sections from Spring 2023 submitted.

Once the data was received, the courses were divided based on those that introduced and reinforced the SLOs. Assessing courses introducing the SLOs establishes a baseline number for the incoming freshman cohort to track their growth over time. Assessing courses that reinforce the SLOs ensures that as students complete their general education requirements, they can demonstrate a level three of proficiency in civic engagement skills. The sample size did not provide any student's work that was aligned to reinforce the SLOs, see Table 6.

Table 6

Course Enrollment and Sample Size in the 2022-2023 Assessment Period

	Introduced	Reinforced	Overall
Enrollment in Course Sections eligible to be assessed	2,267	0	2,267
Enrollment in Courses that participated	1021	0	1,021
Number of Students' Work Included in Analyses	152 (15%)	0	152 (15%)
Fall 2022 sections included	21	0	21
Spring 2023 sections included	7	0	7

The General Education Assessment of Student Learning Committee for civic engagement and global cultural literacy modified the AAC&U Civic Engagement Value Rubric. The rubric uses six performance descriptors on a zero to four-point scale: Not Applicable, (N/A) Not Evident (0), Introducing (1), Approaching (2), Meets Standard (3), and Exceeds Standard (4). The rubric was used to evaluate students' work samples submitted.

A three-day in-person rubric calibration and scoring session was held May 21-23, 2024. Ten faculty members were recruited to review and score students' work using the rubric. On the first day, faculty participated in an interactive training session to calibrate or norm faculty to the scoring rubric. Calibration aims to ensure that a group of educators evaluates student work consistently and in alignment with the scoring rubric. This increases the reliability of the assessment data. When scoring is calibrated, a piece of student work receives the same score regardless of who scores it because all scorers interpret and apply the rubric similarly. To norm faculty to the rubric, the workshop facilitators thoroughly reviewed and discussed the rubric. Sample student artifacts were provided, and faculty members shared their ratings and discussed any differences that arose.

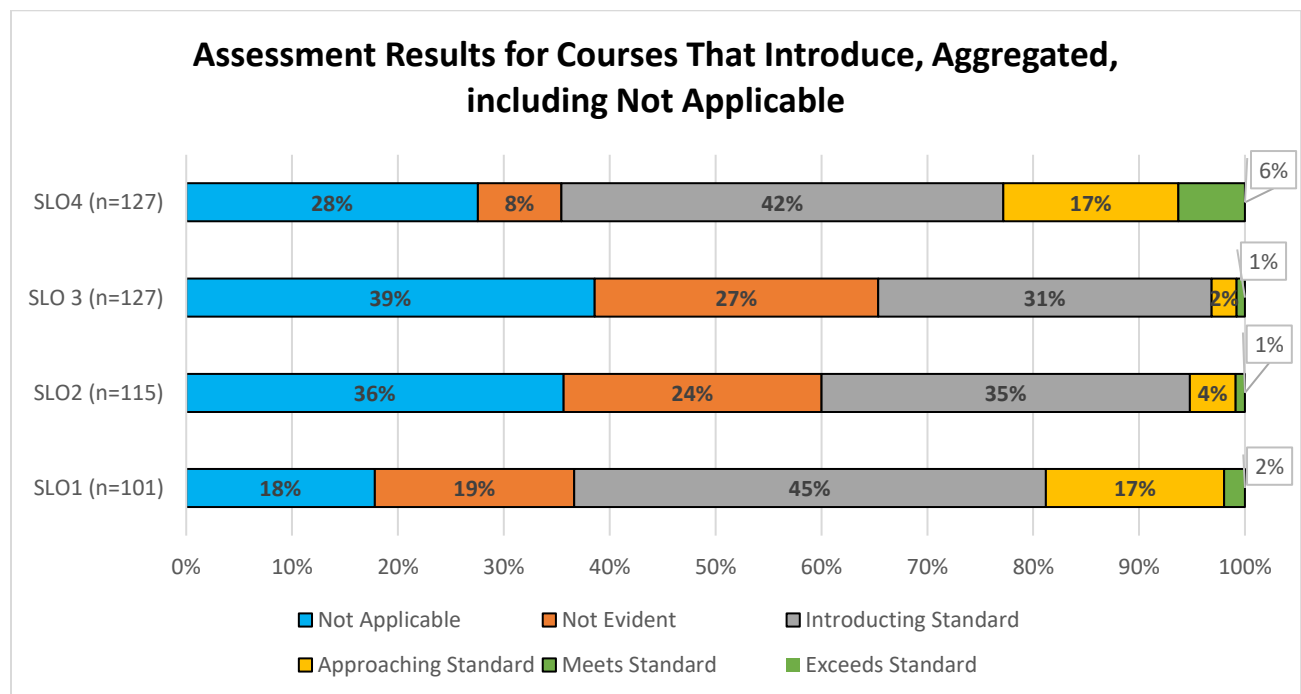
The faculty participated in a juried assessment process for the remaining two days. The second day was designated for civic engagement, and the third day for global cultural literacy. A juried assessment process ensures fairness and consistency in evaluating student achievement. The ten faculty members were divided into five teams of two. The groups were given a set of student artifacts to review and scored independently using the rubric. Each student's artifact was assessed twice. The raters consulted frequently to check that the scores were consistent; if not, they stopped to discuss to agree on a final score. Faculty participants completed the review of student's work by 5:00 PM and earned a small stipend for their efforts.

RESULTS

Figure 1 displays aggregated results from courses that introduce civic engagement SLOs. The figures include a "not applicable" rating. A rating of "not applicable" was used when the artifact was not aligned with the SLOs; thus, the assignment did not require the application of the outcome. A "not evident" rating means the assignment required the application of the outcome, but the student did not demonstrate the SLOs. The baseline established for student performance is that 70% of students will perform at or better than one for courses that introduce the SLOs.

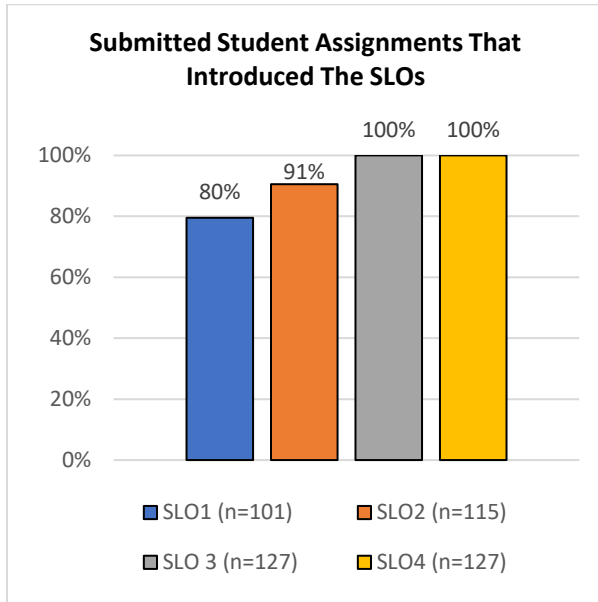
- Civic Engagement SLO 1 Target Not Met: 63% of students scored a one or higher
- Civic Engagement SLO 2 Target Not Met: 40% of students scored a one or higher
- Civic Engagement SLO 3 Target Not Met: 35% of students scored a one or higher
- Civic Engagement SLO 4 Target Not Met: 65% of students scored a one or higher

Figure 1. Courses that Introduce Civic Engagement



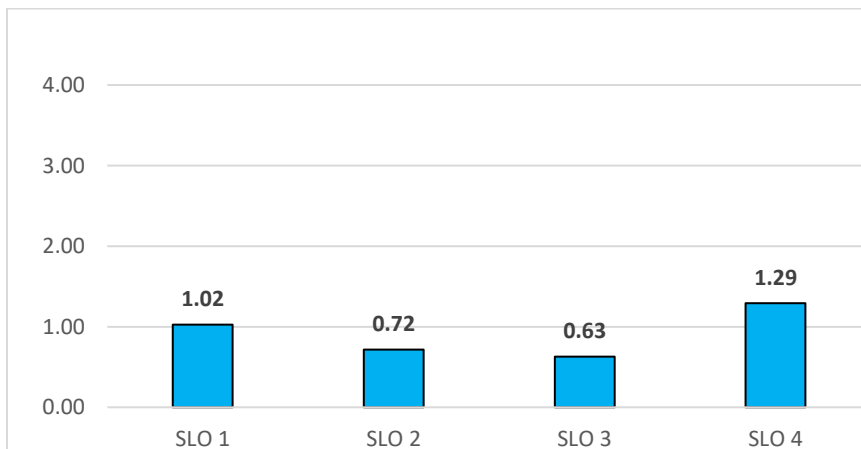
General education courses are not required to align with all four SLOs for civic engagement. Figure 3 displays the percentage of submitted student assignments aligned to measure each SLO.

Figure 3. Assignments Measuring Each SLO



The sample scores were averaged to determine how students generally performed within the cohort. Figure 4 displays the mean proficiency score for each SLO.

Figure 4. Mean Proficiency Score of Civic Engagement SLOs



LIMITATIONS / CHALLENGES

Timing of Revisions and Course Mapping

- **The General Education Assessment of Student Learning Committee's Timeline:** The committee worked on updating the SLOs, developing rubrics, and mapping courses until March. Given this timeline, there was limited time to fully implement the revised SLOs across all relevant courses before the data collection began. This could result in inconsistencies in how faculty interpret the SLOs.
- **Impact on Data Collection:** Because the revisions and course mapping were completed in the spring 2024 semester, instructors may not have had sufficient time to align their assignments with the revised SLOs.
- **First-Time Implementation:** The 2023-2024 academic year marked the beginning of the second assessment cycle; it is the first time these specific SLOs and rubrics are being used to evaluate student performance. Faculty may not be fully aware of the new criteria for assessing student work. This can lead to discrepancies in the data, where student performance may not accurately reflect their true abilities in relation to the SLOs. For instance, an assignment designed under previous SLO guidelines might not effectively measure the new outcomes, leading to skewed results.

EXPECTATIONS OF MISALIGNMENT

- **Inconsistent Alignment of Assignments:** There is an expectation that some assignments may not fully align with the SLOs. This misalignment can lead to inaccurate evaluations of student learning because the assignments might not effectively measure the intended outcomes. For example, an assignment might focus on a skill or knowledge area that is not directly related to the SLO being assessed, leading to data that doesn't accurately reflect student proficiency in that SLO.
- **Data Interpretation:** The misalignment between assignments and SLOs can complicate the interpretation of data. If assignments are not well-aligned with the intended outcomes, the data collected may not provide a true picture of student learning. This could result in either an overestimation or underestimation of student proficiency, making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the curriculum and instruction accurately.

GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM SEQUENCING

- **Curriculum Structure:** Mapping the general education courses revealed that the curriculum was not sequenced or equally distributed to introduce, develop, or reinforce the SLOs. This lack of sequencing creates variability in the level of student readiness and understanding when they encounter courses designed to develop or reinforce SLOs.
- **Impact on Learning Outcomes:** Students taking courses in a non-sequential lower to higher order may not have the necessary foundational knowledge before taking classes

that are supposed to reinforce that knowledge. For example, a student might enroll in a course intended to reinforce an SLO without first taking a course that introduces it, leading to an uneven or incomplete understanding of the material. In addition, a general education curriculum that is not sequenced without a predetermined lower-higher progression may only introduce the SLOs heavily. This lack of sequencing can result in knowledge not being retained or fully integrated into students' skill sets. This variability makes it difficult to assess whether the issue lies with the student's proficiency or the course's effectiveness in reinforcing the SLO.

OBSERVATIONS FROM ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

- **Differences in sample size for SLOs.** As stated previously, general education courses are not required to align with all four SLOs for civic engagement. This accounts for the differences in sample size for each student's learning outcome, see Figure 3. SLO 1 had the smallest sample size of students' work submitted for courses that introduce (n=101) civic engagement. Some implications include that students will receive varied exposure to civic engagement outcomes depending on which ones are emphasized in their chosen courses. This could lead to gaps in knowledge or skills that the general education curriculum aims to cover comprehensively. Furthermore, there may be disparities in course offerings, meaning that not all courses may be equally available to all students due to scheduling, prerequisites, or departmental limitations. Thus, not systematically requiring specific courses to cover SLOs may result in some students missing out on learning experiences aligned with specific SLOs. While allowing flexibility in how courses align with SLOs can benefit faculty and curriculum design, it can also create challenges in ensuring all students receive a comprehensive general education in global cultural literacy.
- **Assessment instruments do not apply to mapped SLO.** On average, 30% of students' work aligned to introduce the SLOs was scored as "not applicable," meaning the assessment instrument did not require students to demonstrate the outcome. SLO 2 (36%) and SLO 3 (39%) are notably high for courses introducing the concept (see Figure 1).). Assessment instruments that do not address or are not designed to measure the intended SLOs are not scored.
- **The SLOs are not measured to reinforce civic engagement.** The curriculum map revealed a significant gap in the general education program. Courses do not reinforce any SLOs within the general education curriculum for civic engagement.
- **Introduction vs. Reinforcement.** The mean proficiency levels between courses that introduce and reinforce SLOs could not be compared because there are currently no courses that reinforce civic engagement SLOs. However, the mean proficiency level was calculated for courses that introduce civic engagement. SLO 2 (0.72) and SLO 3 (0.63) mean proficiency levels show that students are generally below the basic competency level of one. This suggests that the outcome may be challenging for students. The

highest mean proficiency level is SLO 4, with 1.29. Students are showing better engagement or understanding when SLO 4 is introduced compared to the others.

- **SLO 1 Target Not Met for courses that introduce.** The results highlight a 7% shortfall in achieving the desired student proficiency. The shortfall may be accounted for by the 18% of students' work that was determined to be not applicable for measuring the SLO.
- **SLO 2 Target Not Met for courses that introduce.** The data suggests a lower student engagement and proficiency level in SLO 2 than expected. Furthermore, over a third, 36%, of the student's work was not assessed on this outcome, scoring as "not applicable". The results also suggest that there may be gaps in how this SLO is being integrated into the courses.
- **SLO 3 Target Not Met for courses that introduce.** The results for SLO 3 reveal a gap between the desired benchmark and actual student performance, with only 35% of students scoring at or above the minimum proficiency level. This could be attributed to a significant percentage of students' work, 39%, not being assessed on this outcome, scoring as "not applicable." In addition, over a quarter, 27%, of the students showed no evidence of proficiency, indicating they did not engage with or understand the concepts.
- **SLO 4 Target Not Met for courses that introduce.** The results highlight a 5% shortfall in achieving the desired student proficiency. While the target was not met, the results for SLO 4 are closer to the benchmark than the other SLOs. This demonstrates a significant level of basic student engagement and understanding, though there is still room for improvement. The shortfall may also be attributed to the 28% of students' work not assessed on this outcome, scoring as "not applicable."

INSUFFICIENT COURSES REINFORCING GENERAL EDUCATION COMPETENCIES

- **Imbalance in Curriculum Design:** A significant limitation arises when there are not enough courses within the general education curriculum that reinforce SLOs. If most courses are designed to introduce or develop competencies without sufficient reinforcement, students may not have enough opportunities to build on and solidify their learning.
- **Limited Depth of Learning:** Without reinforcement, students may only achieve a surface-level understanding of the competencies. Introducing an SLO in one course without further reinforcement in subsequent courses can result in knowledge that is not retained or fully integrated into the students' skill set. This lack of depth can lead to students meeting the standard in introductory courses but failing to demonstrate proficiency in more advanced contexts.
- **Data Interpretation Challenges:** The over-reliance on courses that introduce or develop SLOs makes it difficult to assess true proficiency. If students are only being introduced to SLOs without consistent opportunities to reinforce and apply their learning, their performance data may not accurately reflect their capabilities. This can lead to an

overestimation of student success in meeting the SLOs when, in fact, their understanding may be superficial or incomplete.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

- To address the limitations and challenges, faculty will be notified before classes start of the competencies and SLOs that will be measured within their courses to ensure that assignments are carefully aligned with the revised SLOs.
- Ensure that all Institution-level Student Learning Outcomes are included in course syllabi.
- Offer assignment design and diagnostic workshops to faculty
- VSU must balance flexibility with a consistent and coherent approach to achieving general educational learning outcomes. Faculty need to collaborate on sequencing the general education curriculum for courses that introduce, develop, and reinforce learning outcomes. Demonstrating a lower-higher order progression in competencies in the curriculum.
- Faculty must identify additional general education courses to reinforce all four civic engagement SLOs.
- SLOs not met. The data collected for this assessment cycle has established a baseline using the mean proficiency scores (see Figure 4), indicating the achievement level of the majority of our students. While we desire to be at one for courses that introduce and three for courses that reinforce, we will continue to monitor and track student achievement levels. In the next cycle, we will measure the growth between our current position and our desired outcome.
- SLOs not met. The low percentage of students not meeting the desired proficiency level suggests potential areas for curriculum improvements, instructional strategies, or additional student support. Targeted intervention may be needed to help more students progress toward meeting the standard, such as tutoring or studying strategies.
- Continue to improve data collection techniques, timing, and notification to faculty.
- Increase course section sample size by 25%.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM GENERAL EDUCATION FACULTY

To be completed by departments by November 15, 2024.

- When considering long-term strategies, create a workshop to explain to students the importance of general education and Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs).
- Conduct workshops for faculty focusing on assignment alignment.
- Ensure that faculty measure student achievement against the general education Student Learning Outcomes (SLOs) at the end of each semester to track progress and improvement.
- Work to streamline and standardize the assessment process for general education.
- Help motivate and encourage students through micro-credentialing.
- Encourage faculty members to incorporate study abroad or service learning into their courses and incentivize by offering grants.

Appendix A

General Education Courses Aligned with Civic Engagement

	ILSLO1	ILSLO2	ILSLO3	ILSLO4
	Describe political systems and how they function.	Articulate their own civic identity and how one participates as an informed citizen in a democratic society.	Propose potential solutions to civic, social, environmental, historical, or economic challenges to meet community needs.	Evaluate the impacts of political or corporate policies on individuals, communities, and the environment.
CJUS 116 Introduction to Criminal Justice	I	I	I	
ECON 100 Basic Economics	I	I	I	I
ECON 210 Principles of Microeconomics	I	D	D	D
ECON 211 Principles of Macroeconomics	D	D	D	D
HIST 114 World History to 1500	I		I	I
HIST 115 World History Since 1500	I		I	I
HIST 122 U.S. History to 1865	I	I	I	I
HIST 123 U.S. History After 1865	I	I	I	I
HIST 241 African American History From 1865 to Present	I, D	I, D	I, D	I, D
POLI 150 United States Government	I	I	I	I
PSYC 101 Introduction to Psychology		I	I	I
PSYC 212 Human Growth & Development		I	I, D	I
SOCI 101 Introduction to Sociology	I	I	I	I

INTRODUCED (I)	DEVELOP (D)	REINFORCED (R)
Students are not expected to be familiar with the content or skill at the collegiate level. Instruction and learning activities focus on basic knowledge, skills, and/or competencies and entry-level complexity. Only one (or a few) aspect(s) of a complex program outcome is addressed in the given course.	Students are expected to possess a basic level of knowledge and familiarity with the content or skills at the collegiate level. Instruction and learning activities concentrate on enhancing and strengthening knowledge, skills, and expanding complexity. Several aspects of the outcome are addressed in the given course, but these aspects are treated separately.	Students are expected to possess a strong foundation in the knowledge, skill, or competency at the collegiate level. Instructional and learning activities continue to build upon previous competencies with increased complexity. All components of the outcome are addressed in the integrative contexts.

