

2012-2013 Annual Program Assessment Report

Please submit report to your department chair or program coordinator, the Associate Dean of your College and the assessment office by Monday, September 30, 2013. You may submit a separate report for each program which conducted assessment activities.

College: S&BS

Department: Geography

Program:

Assessment liaison: Ron Davidson

1. Overview of Annual Assessment Project(s). Provide a brief overview of this year's assessment plan and process.

This year's assessment comprises five components:

- We directly assessed 3 SLOs using the capstone (Geography 490) paper. These were: SLO 2.2: Student demonstrates ability to construct a literature review; SLO 3.2: Student uses prior research to construct an argument or to evaluate a hypothesis; SLO 4.2: Student writes an effective research paper.
- SLO 2.2 (writing literature reviews) was evaluated in our methods class for majors (Geography 300) as well, providing a "value-added" look at this SLO.
- Oral presentations of capstone projects were assessed.
- We continued as well administering pre- and post-tests for World Geography (Geography 150), enabling us to document "value added" in the world-geography components of SLOs 1.1 and 1.2 (Students recognize, recall and identify facts and ideas constituent of the core content knowledge of physical geography (1.1) and human geography (1.2).)
- Indirect program assessment was conducted by interviewing graduating seniors in the capstone course (Geography 490) on the program's strengths and weaknesses.

- a. **Assessment Buy-In.** Describe how your chair and faculty were involved in assessment related activities. Did department meetings include discussion of student learning assessment in a manner that included the department faculty as a whole?

All faculty meetings have assessment on the agenda. At these meetings the faculty continue an ongoing debate on the purpose and content of the capstone course, and have discussed faculty teaching practices and priorities, and have shared information on university-sponsored programs (like WRAD) in response to assessment activities and findings. Dr. Graves is the department's most active faculty member when it comes to assessment, and uses his Geography 300 course as a laboratory of new and experimental learning activities. Dr. Graves and Dr. Davidson coordinated to norm our assessments of literature reviews this year. The chair, Shawna Dark, oversees assessment activities in the department, leads discussions of assessment during faculty meetings, and actively promotes assessment buy-in for the department as a whole.

- b. **Student Learning Outcome Assessment Project.** Answer items a-f for each SLO assessed this year. If you assessed an additional SLO, copy and paste items a-f below, BEFORE you answer them here, to provide additional reporting space.

3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

SLO 2.2: Student demonstrates ability to construct a literature review

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university's Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

- Critical Thinking
- Written Communication
- Quantitative Literacy
- Information Literacy

3c. Does this learning outcome align with University's commitment to supporting diversity through the cultivation and exchange of a wide variety of ideas and points of view? In what ways did the assessed SLO incorporate diverse perspectives related to race, ethnic/cultural identity/cultural orientations, religion, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, veteran status, national origin, age, language, and employment rank?

N/A

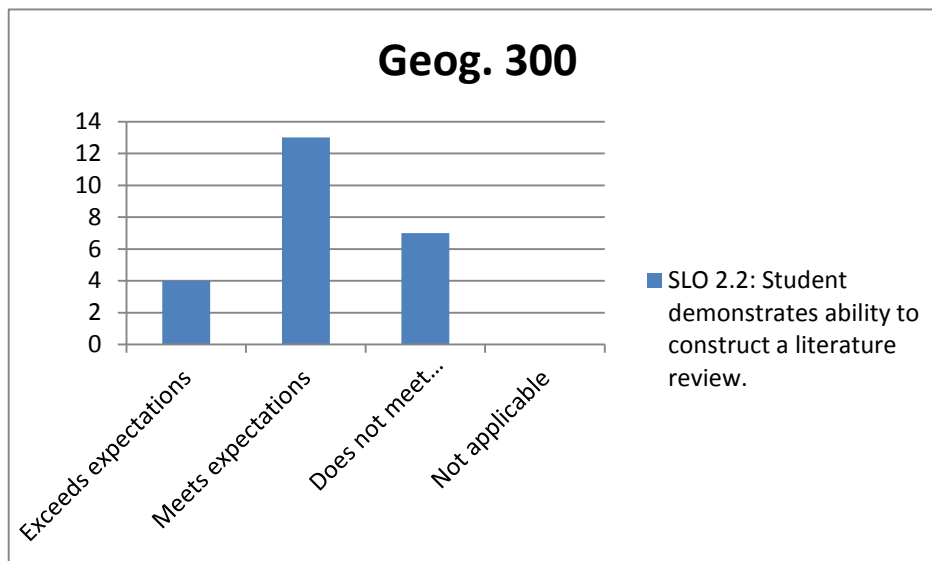
3d. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

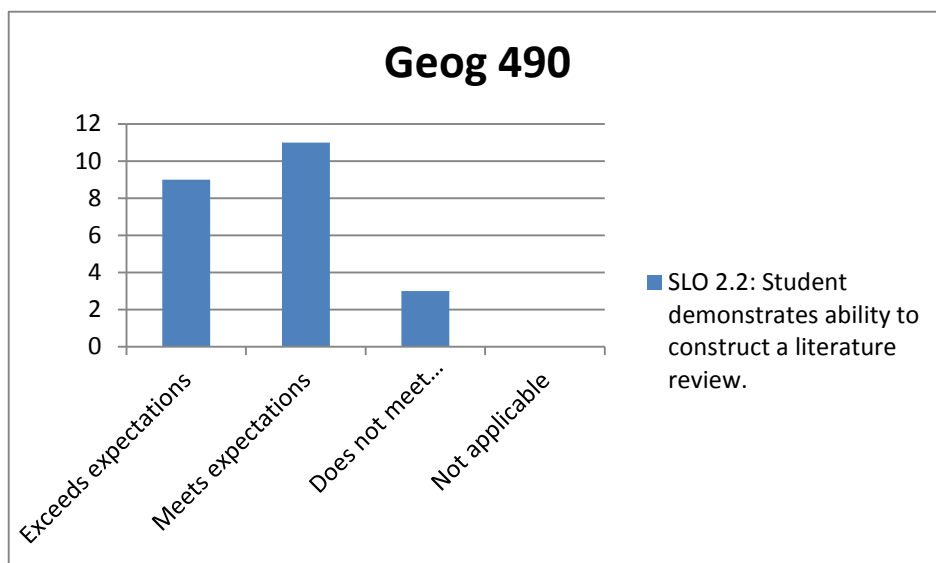
Paper assignments in Geography 300 and the capstone course (Geography 490) papers.

3e. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

The assessment was cross-sectional, involving 24 students in Geography 300 and 23 in Geography 490. Drs. Graves and Davidson normed their assessment standards prior to doing the assessment.

3f. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.





Roughly the same percentage of students produced “adequate” literature reviews at both points in the program, but the percentage of reviews exceeding expectations was twice as high for Geography 490 students than for Geography 300 students. In addition, the number of reviews that did not meet department expectations was significantly lower among seniors. These results show a clear improvement in literature review quality as students progressed from the gateway to the capstone level in our program. It should be noted, moreover, that Geography 300 students benefited from additional writing instruction and the assistance of a WRAD tutor introduced in the past year. The gains shown by Geography 490 student performance stand out even more for this reason.

3g. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

Overall, we are pleased with the quality of our graduating seniors’ literature reviews. However, a lack of long-term gains in scores on literature reviews proves that fostering improvement beyond a certain level is a major challenge. For that reason, faculty continue

to experiment and find ways to further strengthen students' ability to synthesize scholarly papers and write literature reviews.

Changes made this year are:

1. Dr. Craine has added the WRAD program to his Geog 326 (Africa) class.
2. Dr. Graves has added an additional literature review assignment in Geography 300. Students now do 3 literature review assignments. They still have trouble doing well on the third and culminating literature review lab where they are given a set of abstracts and are asked to turn them into a 2 page lit review.

3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

SLO 3.2: Student uses prior research to construct an argument or to evaluate a hypothesis

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university's Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

- Critical Thinking
- Written Communication
- Quantitative Literacy

3c. Does this learning outcome align with University's commitment to supporting diversity through the cultivation and exchange of a wide variety of ideas and points of view? In what ways did the assessed SLO incorporate diverse perspectives related to race, ethnic/cultural identity/cultural orientations, religion, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, veteran status, national origin, age, language, and employment rank?

N/A

3d. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

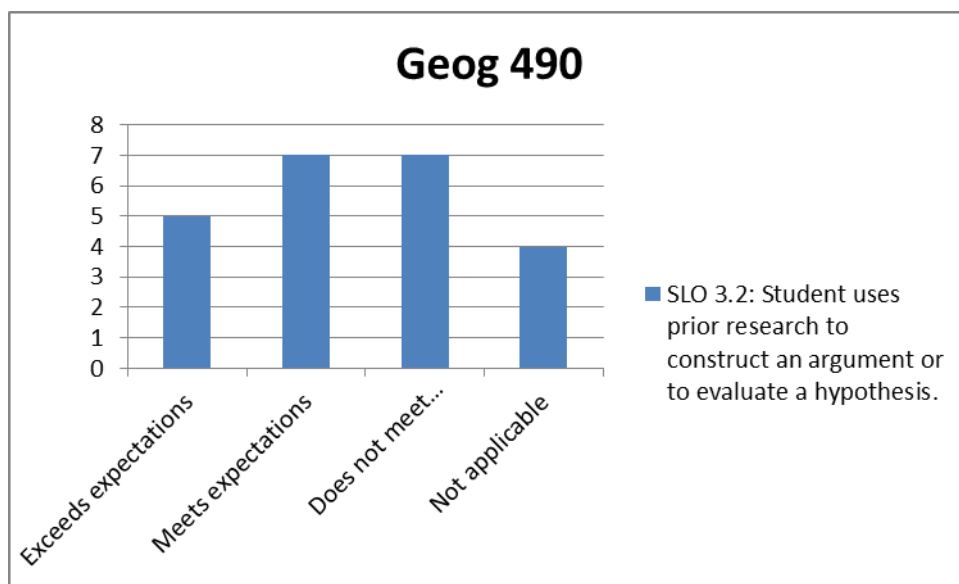
Capstone (Geography 490) papers.

3e. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

The assessment was done on 490 papers only.

3f. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

The papers were scored with a rubric.



The results of this assessment reveal that while most of our seniors meet or exceed expectations with this SLO, slightly more than a third (not counting the “not applicable” column) do not.

3g. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

As a result of this finding, Dr. Jackiewicz, who teaches Geography 490, is spending additional time in Geography 490 to concentrate on teaching hypothesis testing and evaluation this semester.

Dr. Davidson is introducing a lesson on scientific paradigms that includes the Baconian scientific method and hypothesis testing in Cultural Geography (Geography 301).

Dr. Graves will add more instruction on hypothesis formulation to Geography 300.

3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

SLO 4.2: Student writes an effective research paper.

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university's Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

- Critical Thinking
- Written Communication
- Information Literacy

3c. Does this learning outcome align with University's commitment to supporting diversity through the cultivation and exchange of a wide variety of ideas and points of view? In what ways did the assessed SLO incorporate diverse perspectives related to race, ethnic/cultural identity/cultural orientations, religion, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, veteran status, national origin, age, language, and employment rank?

N/A

3d. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

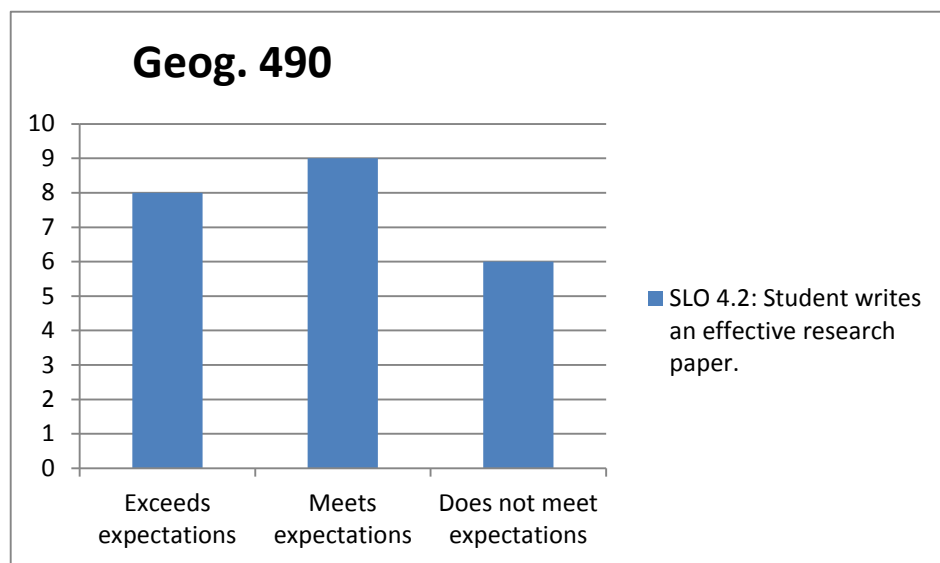
N/A

3e. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

The capstone (Geography 490) papers were assessed.

3f. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

The papers were scored with a rubric.



Approximately 2/3 of our seniors write at or above department expectations. We feel that this reflects well on the overall quality of our majors. However, the percentage in the bottom category remains high.

3g. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

1. Dr. Craine has added the WRAD program to his Geog 326 (Africa) class. (This addresses literature reviews as well as general writing quality, and hence appears in the earlier section 3g).
2. Dr. Craine has, in addition introduced a new way to evaluate graduate students' ability to read and comprehend journal articles and book chapters. This method was developed in the CSUN Reading Initiative Workshop.
3. Dr. Davidson has added a lecture on “narrative” in geography 301, aiming to get students to think critically about how to select and arrange data in rhetorically strategic ways to argue a thesis.

3a. Which Student Learning Outcome was measured this year?

- G4: Students are effective oral communicators.

3b. Does this learning outcome align with one or more of the university's Big 5 Competencies? (Delete any which do not apply)

- Oral Communication
- Information Literacy

3c. Does this learning outcome align with University's commitment to supporting diversity through the cultivation and exchange of a wide variety of ideas and points of view? In what ways did the assessed SLO incorporate diverse perspectives related to race, ethnic/cultural identity/cultural orientations, religion, sexual orientation, gender/gender identity, disability, socio-economic status, veteran status, national origin, age, language, and employment rank?

N/A

3d. What direct and/or indirect instrument(s) were used to measure this SLO?

N/A

3e. Describe the assessment design methodology: For example, was this SLO assessed longitudinally (same students at different points) or was a cross-sectional comparison used (Comparing freshmen with seniors)? If so, describe the assessment points used.

Student oral presentations of capstone (Geography 490) projects were assessed using a rubric.

Only the Geography 490 students were assessed

3f. Assessment Results & Analysis of this SLO: Provide a summary of how the results were analyzed and highlight findings from the collected evidence.

Overall, the Geography 490 students received an average score of 82/100 points for oral communication. However, this masks variability in two sub-components assessed: for appropriate use of media, students scored 86% and for presentation skills (eye contact, pacing, not reading from notes) they received 72%. Students pre-disposed to nervousness have a tendency to read too much from their slides or note cards, make poor eye contact, speak too softly or too rapidly. As a result too many of them fail to engage the audience or cogently argue their point.

3g. Use of Assessment Results of this SLO: Describe how assessment results were used to improve student learning. Were assessment results from previous years or from this year used to make program changes in this reporting year? (Possible changes include: changes to course content/topics covered, changes to course sequence, additions/deletions of courses in program, changes in pedagogy, changes to student advisement, changes to student support services, revisions to program SLOs, new or revised assessment instruments, other academic programmatic changes, and changes to the assessment plan.)

Students get little training within the Geography Department in public speaking and a single class on public speaking in their GE path.

We have implemented on a trial basis a new requirement that forces students to present research at a disciplinary conference. This proved a wildly successful experience for students in terms of their overall professionalization, but it remains unclear if it helped improve their oral presentation skills. We plan on making permanent this requirement as long as funding is available.

4. Assessment of Previous Changes: Present documentation that demonstrates how the previous changes in the program resulted in improved student learning.

We first did pre- and post-tests on World Geography (Geography 150) material in 2008/09 (i.e. giving the tests in 150 classes and again in our capstone course). The results were that our seniors scored on average 12% better than our incoming students. Last year, the improvement was 28%. We had, in the interim, moved more of our full-time faculty into 150 classrooms to improve the quality of those classes. The impact is clearly significant.

That said, the most consistently assessed SLO in the past few years has been the literature review, and the results here provide less cause for celebration. We assessed literature reviews in 2007-08 and found the average score to be 3.3 (out of 5); in 2008-09 the average dipped to 3.0. In 2010-11 we were pleasantly surprised to find the average significantly up, to 3.5. We did not assess literature reviews in 2011-12, but the result for 2012/3 was back to 3.3. This finding is somewhat discouraging, as it suggests we are basically holding constant rather than seeing improvement. On the other hand, this year's data comparing students in Geography 300 and Geography 490 suggest that student performance on literature reviews improves significantly during the program. Getting them to improve even further is a stubbornly difficult task. We have a relatively small populations of seniors to assess every year, so the

results may reflect variability in the quality of our classes from year to year – including an outstanding group in 2010-11. But the picture that is emerging over time is suggestive and will inform department assessment discussions this year.

5. Changes to SLOs? Please attach an updated course alignment matrix if any changes were made. (Refer to the Curriculum Alignment Matrix Template, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

N/A

6. Assessment Plan: Evaluate the effectiveness of your 5 year assessment plan. How well did it inform and guide your assessment work this academic year? What process is used to develop/update the 5 year assessment plan? Please attach an updated 5 year assessment plan for 2013-2018. (Refer to Five Year Planning Template, plan B or C, http://www.csun.edu/assessment/forms_guides.html.)

The Five-Year Plan contains our department SLOs and the direct and indirect measures to be used. Our assessment efforts are accurately captured by the plan.

7. Has someone in your program completed, submitted or published a manuscript which uses or describes assessment activities in your program? Please provide citation or discuss.

N/A

8. Other information, assessment or reflective activities or processes not captured above.

Indirect program assessment was conducted by interviewing graduating seniors in the capstone course (Geography 490) on the program's strengths and weaknesses. While students on the whole were highly positive about the program, the interviews produced a list of 20 specific student recommendations. This represents the views of a single cohort of students, and we intend to interview Geography 490 students regularly to identify recurring criticisms the department would deal with. For the record, here is the list of responses this year:

1. Map interpretation should be required.
2. More emphasis needed on methodology.
3. People need to be trained in Excel as a pre-requisite for GIS.

4. More emphasis on resume writing,
5. Online classes are too easy.
6. Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop classes should be required.
7. The department should advertise recreation classes like caving, outdoor navigation, mountain biking.
8. More physical geography classes should be required.
9. More structured academic writing should be required in more classes.
10. Faculty should go to 300 to meet students
11. More cartography courses
12. Spatial Statistics should be required.
13. More cultural/human field studies
14. Avoid scheduling GIS and Physical Environment at the same time.
15. Integrate GIS into more classes
16. More real-world GIS applications
17. More non-GIS internships
18. More service learning
19. One more remote sensing course
20. Workshops on various topics with faculty