

GE SLO Communication  
Fall 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 mapped to GE outcomes encourage the development of these capabilities, and (2) the students passing these courses have, indeed, developed the capabilities.

Communication is a primary skill that those earning an associate degree from RCC should possess. The GE outcome for communication reads as follows:

Students will be able to communicate effectively in diverse situations. They will be able to create, express, and interpret meaning in oral, visual, and written forms. They will also be able to demonstrate quantitative literacy and the ability to use graphical, symbolic, and numerical methods to analyze, organize, and interpret data.

### Assessment Project and Instrument

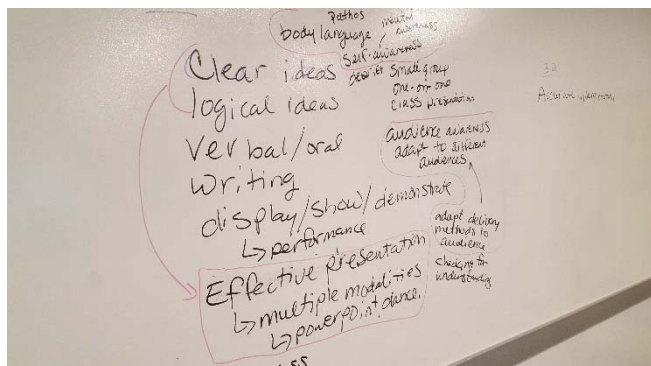
In Fall 2019, the Riverside Assessment Committee (RAC) did a direct assessment of student work in four content areas using the attached rubric, which divided the GE SLO into two parts. The courses were chosen to include student work from different divisions across the college.

The four content areas and artifacts were as follows:

1. Chapter 4 entitled “Applications of Differentiation” from a Math 1A textbook (Calculus I).
2. A prompt and the instructor’s evaluation/narrative of a group project for FTV 41 (Introduction to Telecommunications).
3. A prompt and peer review of a script for English 38 (Introduction to Screenwriting).

- A prompt and a display of the student's progression through the stages of an assignment from Com 1H (Public Speaking-Honors).

Those who participated in the assessment and rubric scoring were provided with the assignment, where available, for reference only and were instructed not to grade the student



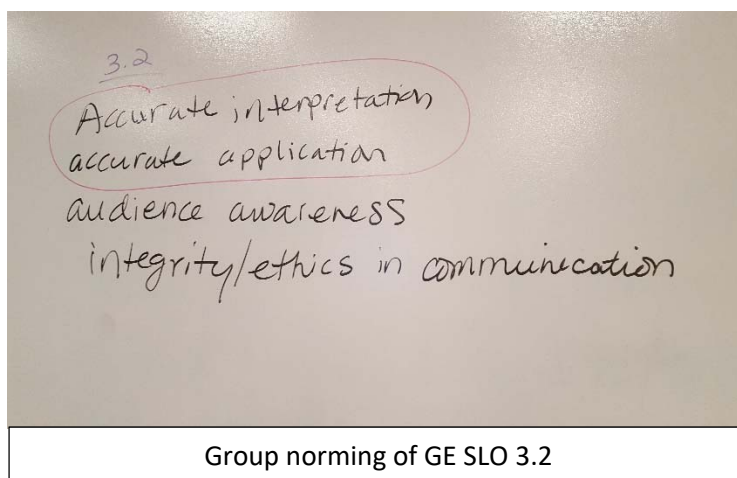
Group norming of GE SLO 3.1

work. Instead, the members were told to evaluate the student work for the artifacts' ability to allow the students to demonstrate communication competency in conjunction with the artifact. In other words, the participants were advised to look at the artifacts and see what the students were being asked to do and then determine to what degree the student demonstrated communication competency 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 SLO before beginning the analysis of the artifacts (see photos on this page). The group developed a common vocabulary of words and phrases to discuss communication skills and competencies, specifically what these broad terms mean, what the component parts of communication competencies are, and what this might look like in various assignments and student work.

We were hoping to learn primarily to what degree our students were able to demonstrate communication competence upon completion of courses mapped to this GE SLO. Secondly, we knew that we would also be evaluating the artifacts, and whether the artifacts in courses mapped to this GE SLO were allowing students to approach, meet, or exceed the standards set forth in the rubric.



Group norming of GE SLO 3.2

## Results

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

Math 1A					
GE 3.1 Students will be able to communicate effectively in diverse situations. They will be able to create, express, and interpret meaning in oral, visual, and written forms.	Exceeds	Meets X	Approaches	Does Not Meet	N/A
GE 3.2 They will also be able to demonstrate quantitative literacy and the ability to use graphical, symbolic, and numerical methods to analyze, organize, and interpret data.		X			

FTV 41					
GE 3.1 Students will be able to communicate effectively in diverse situations. They will be able to create, express, and interpret meaning in oral, visual, and written forms.	Exceeds	Meets	Approaches X	Does Not Meet	N/A
GE 3.2 They will also be able to demonstrate quantitative literacy and the ability to use graphical, symbolic, and numerical methods to analyze, organize, and interpret data				X	

Eng 38					
GE 3.1 Students will be able to communicate effectively in diverse situations. They will be able to create, express, and interpret meaning in oral, visual, and written forms.	Exceeds	Meets X	Approaches	Does Not Meet	N/A
GE 3.2 They will also be able to demonstrate quantitative literacy and the ability to use graphical, symbolic, and numerical methods to analyze, organize, and interpret data					X

Com 1H					
GE 3.1 Students will be able to communicate effectively in diverse situations. They will be able to create, express, and interpret meaning in oral, visual, and written forms.	Exceeds X	Meets	Approaches	Does Not Meet	N/A
GE 3.2 They will also be able to demonstrate quantitative literacy and the ability to use graphical, symbolic, and numerical methods to analyze, organize, and interpret data	X				

### Analysis

Overall, the scoring of this GE SLO went smoothly because many in the room had previously participated in reviewing artifacts and evaluating them in light of GE SLOs. The fact that the whole process went so smoothly can also be attributed to the group norming process at the beginning of the session before breaking up into smaller groups to work with individual artifacts. In fact, as the RAC has evolved the scoring process, we have realized that the group norming is integral to the assessment process and can serve as a proven 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 the photos) to help those doing the evaluation.

The groups' conversations seemed to focus on two areas in particular: what effective communication looked like and whether quantitative literacy could or would be met by non-mathematical assignments.



Group scoring the FTV 41 artifacts

For example, the group scoring the FTV 41 artifacts discussed the potential audience for the finished student films and wondered not just who the audience was for the finished student films but also whether the assignment required consideration of the audience. Audience awareness was one of the elements of effective communication described in GE 3.1 as determined by the group during the norming process.

The group scoring the Com 1 artifacts determined the artifacts provided exceeded the expectations of both GE SLO 3.1 and 3.2. For part 3.1, the group believed the students were required by the assignment to follow a process. This process then enabled students to begin developing the skill to communicate effectively in diverse situations. The assignment started with students creating an annotated bibliography from a variety of sources and then moving through the process by creating an outline and finally creating speaking notes for when the students presented their speeches. The students had to create, express, and interpret information and meaning in multiple forms throughout their process. The group felt that the artifact presented also exceeded the standard normed by the group for part 3.2 again because of the process the students had to follow. The students had to develop an audience survey early on in the preparation of their speech, which then provided data they needed to analyze and interpret to understand their audience. From the data they collected, the students then needed to develop their speeches with evidence and information to persuade their audience. Additionally, the group felt the fact the students were required to have sources, incorporate them into their speech, and then provide them on a reference page also helped students develop this skill. Finally, for both GE 3.1 and 3.2, the group did note that it was not this one course or assignment that would produce this skill in students; instead, enrollment in multiple classes will meet and/or exceed this requirement across the college.



Group scoring the Eng 38 artifacts

The group that discussed and analyzed the English 38 artifacts found the assignment did meet the standard for GE SLO 3.1. Students were required to critique the work of a peer in the course and then write them a letter explaining their rationale. The group spent time discussing the self-monitoring process that would occur during the critique process. During the large group norming process, the group spent time on self-

awareness and self-monitoring as the requisite qualities needed for this objective. The group scoring the English 38 artifacts believed the assignment not only provided students with opportunities to present effective and clear communication but also reflected an awareness of the audience with whom they were communicating within the letter. From this process, the students learned mindfulness of language and empathy towards another in how they expressed themselves, and it is for this reason the group felt these artifacts did provide students with opportunities to develop effective communication in diverse situations in written form.

The most interesting conversation had to have been the group that worked with the Math 1A artifacts. This group had chapter four of the most commonly used calculus book, including the lesson and the practice problems. While it seems clear that math problems would require students to “demonstrate quantitative literacy and the ability to use graphical, symbolic, and numerical methods to analyze, organize, and interpret data,” this group said that students would master this only if they succeeded at the assignment. In fact, they wrote “In terms of presenting and effectively communicating, the assignment seems unrelated to interpersonal communication.” In other words, what appeared to be a foregone conclusion about a particular assignment was not after a closer look using specific criteria.



Group scoring the Math 1A artifact

This group also struggled to determine whether students in Math 1A would meet SLO 3.1. They chose “approaches,” then scratched it out. Then, they chose “Does not meet” and added a note with an asterisk to their scoring sheet. Finally, they chose “Meets” not because the student would practice or master interpersonal skills but because the “assignment is relevant to creating [and] interpreting meaning” (emphasis in original). In other words, even the artifact that seemed like it would be easy to assess was not as the group members really dug into what the SLO meant and what it would look like in student work.

During the whole-group debrief at the end of the norming and evaluation session, four main points were discussed. First, the whole group discussed how RCC as an institution is doing in relation to the Communication GE SLO. It was generally agreed that the assignments for Communication Studies, Film, and English were clear and succinct and offered the students the opportunity to meet the requirement of the SLO. The math artifact, on the other hand, did not meet the requirement for oral communication. It fit the guidelines of visual and written forms by requiring work to be shown, but students do not usually get in front of the class and explain how they solved math problems. However, math and nursing have begun “flipping” the teaching method by requiring students to read the lecture as homework and using class time to work in groups on problems and examples to reinforce the lecture information.

Next, the whole group discussed what they had learned about the Communication GE SLO. The consensus seemed to be that assignments need to be created so that they not only meet the course SLO but also that the instructor has in mind the GE SLOs. Said differently, the instructors need to think about an assignment at different levels including class level and GE level. Another point on which the group agreed was that not all courses are going to map to GE SLOs. A technique course like Dance is not going to connect to many, or maybe any, GE SLOs.

Third, the group discussed whether it seemed assignments at RCC are assessing what is being taught in the classroom. The consensus was yes, they are, but creating assignments is definitely a trial and error process, though one that is necessary if faculty hope students understand their assignments and can see the assignment's structure.

Finally, the group discussed the ways in which RCC courses give students the opportunity to learn and demonstrate communication skills. The group members were able to provide many examples including

- Clinic floor in Cosmetology – students don't just learn by lecture and demonstration, but they practice their skills by working on actual clients. Students are assessed after every application, and the clients give feedback to the students, too. Students are required to communicate with their clients throughout the process.
- Dance – Rita Chenoweth described the *Dance is All Around You* show being performed December 14-15, 2019 at the college. That is an opportunity to communicate with the dancers, cast, community, audience.
- Co-curricular – TRIO and Cal Works see students year after year and see them grow over time and how it effects their presentation of self. They coach the students to develop communication skills by speaking with instructors, other students, and staff and encourage them to be their own advocates. Many are first-generation college students and they don't have anyone else in the family to help guide them. Some students are accepted to 4 year institutions, but don't go on because they are not confident enough to navigate the process. TRIO and Cal Works try to keep contact with them to help them in their next steps before they officially begin at the four-year school. They see them through the whole life cycle from the time they arrive at RCC to transfer.
- Philosophy – students are required to present and be vocal. Most classes use a discussion element in large and small groups during the class. Students typically do better in small groups, but over the semester most people have broken out of their shell and develop that acumen.



Final group discussion, analysis & debrief

### Future Implications and Recommendations

Based on the analysis and the conversations reported above, the RAC recommends the following:

- Following up with math and nursing to see how their “flipped” classrooms are going and looking at assessments to see if this teaching method improves student learning.

- Offering workshops or brown bag lunches through Faculty Development that would introduce faculty to the GE SLOs and allow faculty to discuss and revise their assignments to include GE SLOs in addition to course SLOs.
- Offering workshops on the AVID strategies of WICOR to help faculty learn how to incorporate writing and oral communication, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading into their courses.
- For courses taught by part-time faculty, being explicit about how SLOs relate to GE SLOs. Full-time faculty can help part-time faculty with this by reminding them to pay special attention to the SLOs and GE SLOs.
- Continuing to share the results of GE and other assessments with constituent groups on campus such as GEM-Q, Curriculum Committee, leadership councils, PLT, and others.

### Conclusion

This GE SLO assessment seemed to generate much deep thought about the importance of assignments to both improved student learning and enhanced assessment results. Instructors need to frequently revisit their assignments, checking for clarity and ensuring that the assignment looks in multiple directions: toward the students' level of understanding, toward the course SLOs, and toward the GE SLOs if applicable for the class. Workshops for faculty can provide this kind of guidance.

Though the group danced around the issue, the idea that not every course needs to be connected to a GE SLO was also on the minds of those in the room, as evidenced by some of the comments. Another recommendation is that disciplines should review their course mapping in Nuventive Improve to make sure that all courses that need to be mapped to a GE SLO are and to decide as a discipline whether a course that is mapped to a GE SLO really should be.

Finally, AVID for Higher Education (AHE) has recently come to RCC, and after assessing the Communication GE SLO, it seems appropriate to mention WICOR, the collection of strategies that all instructors in all disciplines are encouraged to use. WICOR stands for writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading, and the idea behind these strategies is that all teachers should teach and incorporate writing, inquiry, collaboration, organization, and reading into their classes. It could be recommended that oral communication—not just writing—should be incorporated into all classes. Math and nursing are starting to do this with their introduction of flipped lessons; other disciplines should be encouraged to learn about WICOR and find appropriate ways to use WICOR in their classes.