

Co-Curricular Assessment Report

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Mission/Purpose

K-State First is the University's first-year experience program, our way of helping students establish a great foundation for the rest of their college career. We offer first-year seminar courses and learning communities designed specifically for first-year students. We are also the home for the University's common reading program, K-State First Book (KSFB). In everything we do, K-State First is deeply committed to academic excellence, community, diversity, and the empowerment of students.

Assessment Goals

K-State First has conducted program assessment since 2008. In 2020, we implemented a Student Learning Outcome assessment designed to gather information on how well our students are meeting the outcomes for all first-year courses. We ask faculty and instructors to complete our designed assessment each fall.

Our first goal this year was to increase assessment completion rates. We ask all K-State First faculty and instructors to assess student learning in the courses they lead. In 2022, only 25% of faculty and instructors completed the SLO assessments. In total, they assessed 450 students. SLO completion rates were particularly low for CAT Communities, with only 18% of instructors completing the assessment.

This year, our office made a concerted effort to remind and encourage faculty and instructors to complete this important activity. Our efforts appear to have paid off as 61% of K-State First faculty and instructors completed SLO assessments (70% of First-Year Seminars, 56% of CAT Communities). In total, they assessed 764 students, which is a significant increase from last year.

Table 1: SLO Assessment Completion Rate

	Fall 2022	Fall 2003
CAT SLO	18%	56%
FYS SLO	32%	70%
All SLO	25%	61%

Our second goal was to continue monitoring student performance on our outcomes. We thought this was particularly important given the low completion rates last year.

Outcomes Selected for Assessment

K-State First assesses four student learning outcomes:

1. Think critically

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2. Communicate effectively
3. Build community
4. Apply learning

Executive Summary

K-State First has conducted program assessment since 2008. In 2020, recognizing the importance of assessing student learning outcomes comprehensively, we implemented a Student Learning Outcome assessment designed to gather information on how well our students are meeting the outcomes for all first-year courses. Our primary aim for the year was twofold: to bolster SLO completion rates and to gain deeper insights into the evolving landscape of student performance, tracing changes from the inception of this assessment framework.

Upon conducting our assessment, we were pleased to observe a high percentage of students demonstrating mastery across all four designated student learning outcomes: building community, applying learning, and communicating effectively. Notably, our analysis revealed a promising increase in student proficiency of the fourth outcome, critical thinking, particularly for students enrolled in first-year seminars. This was a primary goal developed after last year's assessments.

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OUTCOME 1: Student Learning Outcomes

Assessment Methods

Instructors used a 5-point scale rubric to assess how well their students met our Student Learning Outcomes by the end of the semester. This rubric was included on an ungraded Canvas assignment that instructors submitted at the end of the semester. On submitting this report, we also include a copy of this rubric. This rubric provides us with quantitative data on how well students met each SLO. All K-State First faculty were instructed to complete this assessment; in total, we work with ~100 faculty members.

Assessment Period Measured

We launched our 2023 assessment process with an instructor training in August and an optional follow-up training session in November. The K-State First office also sent multiple reminder emails to instructors and faculty during November and December. Instructors completed their assessments of student performance during the Fall 2023 semester and results were sent to K-State First after the semester concluded.

Assessor(s)

Brent Weaver and Brie Heidbreder.

Assessment Data

We collected feedback from all CAT Community and First-Year Seminar instructors on how well their students met Student Learning Outcomes. In total 61% of K-State First faculty and instructors completed the SLO assessment. Instructors used a rubric on Canvas with a five-point scale to assess how well their students met each SLO. Our report includes the assessment of 764 students.

Assessment Analysis

The SLO assessment data, found in Table 2, tracks the performance of students across various learning outcomes over three fall semesters: 2020, 2022, and 2023. Each cell indicates the percentage of students demonstrating mastery at the 3+ level on a 5-point Likert scale in our rating rubric (attached).

Overall, the data suggests a positive trend in student performance across the assessed learning outcomes, demonstrating consistent high performance in applying learning, building community, effective communication, and critical thinking skills.

Table 2: Student Learning Outcome Assessment

	Fall 2020	Fall 2022	Fall 2023
Apply learning	91%	96%	95%
Build community	91%	98%	93%
Communicate effectively	93%	95%	93%
Think critically (CAT)	93%	98%	96%
Think critically (FYS)	89%	91%	93%

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From 2020, SLO data shows that there's been an improvement in students' ability to apply their learning in K-State First courses. When it comes to building community, there was a notable increase from fall 2020 to fall 2022, followed by a slight decrease in Fall 2023. However, the overall trend shows a strong ability to build community among students. The data indicates consistent performance in effective communication skills, maintaining between 93% to 95% across the three semesters. Finally, there's a steady improvement in critical thinking skills in both CAT Communities and First-Year Seminars.

Conclusion

As a team, K-State First increased assessment completion rates for our Student Learning Outcomes. This was achieved through our efforts to train faculty and instructors on assessment processes and remind them of the importance of this task.

The assessment revealed that a high percentage of students demonstrated mastery of all four student learning outcomes: building community, applying learning, communicating effectively, and thinking critically. Additionally, the assessment highlighted an improvement in the "think critically" outcome for students in first-year seminars, which was a goal developed after the previous year's assessment.

Recommendations

Our efforts to increase participation in this year's SLO assessment were successful. We doubled the percentage of faculty and instructors completing and submitting SLO assessments for their classes. During the upcoming academic year, we will continue to monitor and evaluate SLO completion rates to ensure sustained improvement over time.

We will also provide ongoing support and professional development opportunities for instructors to further enhance instruction, as it relates to our SLOs, across all our classrooms.

Additionally, we will meet as a team to discuss more targeted assessment in the future. Specifically, while we are pleased to see a high percentage of students demonstrating mastery of all four student learning outcomes, the data we are receiving from these SLO assessments are not providing a holistic understanding of the success of our classroom programs. In the future, we will explore using a rotating timeline for additional assessments of our First-Year Seminars and CAT Communities. A potential timeline could be:

Year 1: Residential CAT Communities

Year 2: Non-residential CAT Communities

Year 3: First-Year Seminars

During the assigned assessment years, we will continue to ask faculty and instructors to complete an assessment of SLOs using coursework. Focusing on one of our programs for assessment each year allows us to prioritize outreach to those faculty and instructors. By narrowing our focus, we can also allocate sufficient time and

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attention to thoroughly understand the strengths, challenges, and opportunities for continued improvement in CAT Communities and First-Year Seminars.

We will then add an extra element to the assessment where we seek feedback from students and peer-learning assistants. Collecting data from students and peer mentors will help us gain deeper insights into the classroom environment and the factors influencing student performance on the assessed learning outcomes.

Submitted on: February 23, 2024

Submitted by: Brianne Heidbreder