SLCC

Engaged Learning

Salt Lake Community College

Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome ePortfolio Assessment Final Report Academic Year 2019-2020

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Purpose

Each year the Engaged Learning Office seeks to determine how well students meet the civic literacy student learning outcome (CLSLO) within designated service-learning classes at Salt Lake Community College (SLCC).

Sample and Method

For the 2019-2020 academic year, the study pulled a sample of service-learning designated sections where service-learning is required, including, but not exclusive to General Education. These sections totaled 687 graduating students receiving an AS, AA, or AAS degree by May 2020. Of the 687, a total of 664 students were pulled for assessment. Of the 664, 237 students had evidence of a service-learning course in their ePortfolio.

Three teams composed of two faculty or staff assessors each evaluated service-learning assignments. The assessor teams checked inter-rater reliability with five ePortfolios to ensure that the rubric was validated. Each team reviewed a portion of the sample. The teams met virtually and discussed each assignment, creating a scoring consensus. The assignments in a course received scores under the characteristic subcategories of each criteria, and then this score was averaged to create an overall score for each broad criteria. If a student uploaded multiple assignments within one course, the assessors reviewed all assignments and gave an overall score.

The CLSLO rubric (Appendix A) outlines each criteria and characteristic subcategories based on the SLCC Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome.

SLCC's Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome

SLCC's General Education CLSLO reads as follows:

Students develop civic literacy and the capacity to be community-engaged learners who act in mutually beneficial ways with community partners. *This includes producing learning artifacts indicating understanding of the political, historical, economic or sociological aspects of social change and continuity; thinking critically about—and weighing the evidence surrounding—issues important to local, national, or global communities; participating in a broad range of community-engagement and/or service-learning courses for community building and an enhanced academic experience.*

The current rubric operationalizes the CLSLO in the following manner:

- **Develop civic literacy/knowledge ("Civic Literacy")**
  - Students gain knowledge of political, historical, economic, or sociological aspects of social change. They develop knowledge of agencies/organizations that address social issues. They also gain awareness of power structures, privilege/oppression, and/or systems when trying to address a social issue.

- **Critical thinking surrounding social issues/capacity to become a community-engaged learner ("Critical Thinking")**
  - Students apply critical thinking to their civic knowledge. Students identify issues through a disciplinary lens and then identify, explain, or analyze facts and theories from their academic field

and identify impacts on society. This category also includes a commitment to community engagement, which evaluates students' intention to participate in service. Students also reflect on personal values, attitudes, or beliefs, perhaps in relation to others.

- **Working with others ("Working with Others")**
  - Students state, explain, or analyze their perspectives on cultural, disciplinary, and ethical issues. They express openness in interacting with others of diverse backgrounds or actively seek out other perspectives.

- **Civic action/students act in mutually beneficial ways ("Civic Action")**
  - Civic action includes the breadth or depth of community engagement and how students collaborate with community partners. Mutually beneficial relationships include perspective-taking and how a student expressed the value of the experience.

The scoring rubric has evolved in the past six years. A modified version of the Civic Engagement Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubric from the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) was used from 2014-2017. Then components of the Civic-Minded Graduate Rubric 2.0 from Indiana University Purdue University-Indianapolis were also incorporated starting in the 2017-2018 academic year. All revisions aligned with the language from the SLCC CLSLO. The SLCC assessment coordinator provided feedback during the revision process and then approved the rubric's 2017-2018 final version. In the same year, the college-wide Student Learning Outcomes Assessment Committee evaluated the rubric, and its members suggested no changes. The assessment coordinator reviewed the rubric again in 2020 and suggested additional revisions. Some of the modifications included replacing Awareness of Democratic Structures with Awareness of Power Structures. The vocabulary of 3-Competent, 2-Developing, and 1-Beginner was changed to less value-laden language based on feedback. The rubric now uses a scoring system of 3-High, 2-Medium, 1-Low, and 0-no evidence ranking each characteristic subcategory.

Summary of Findings
The assessment's primary findings indicate that few students are above a low level on the overall rubric, and signature assignments related to civic literacy are still not being uploaded consistently for service-learning courses.

Results

Figure 1 shows that 64% of students did not have an ePortfolio, or their ePortfolio did not include their service-learning course. Evaluation occurred for the remaining 36% that had their course listed or evidence posted.

Figure 1: Percent with no ePortfolio or no course listed verses those that had assignment posted and evaluated in the ePortfolio.

Percent with no ePortfolio or no course listed, versus those that had assignment posted and evaluated in the ePortfolio.

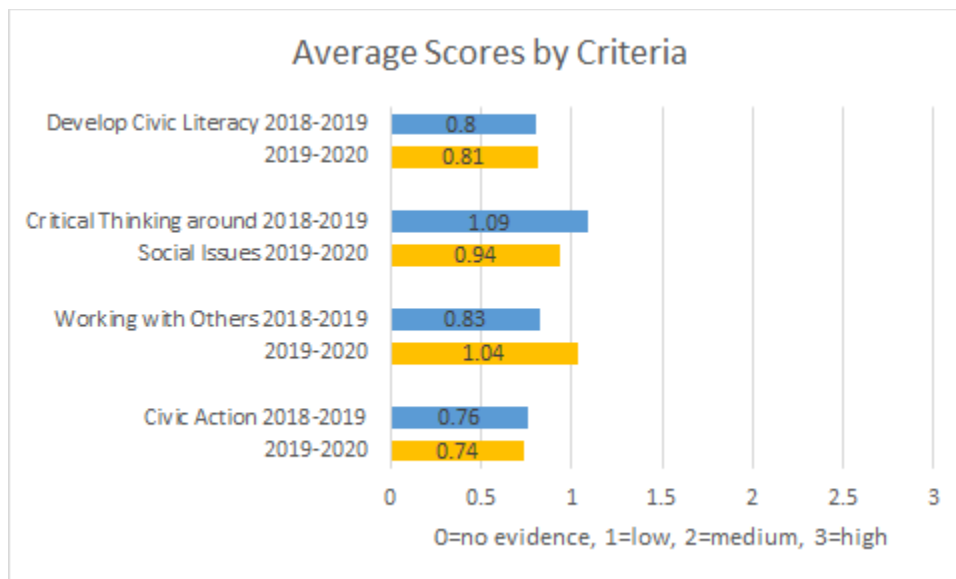■ No eportfolio or no course listed in ePortfolio   ■ Evidence posted
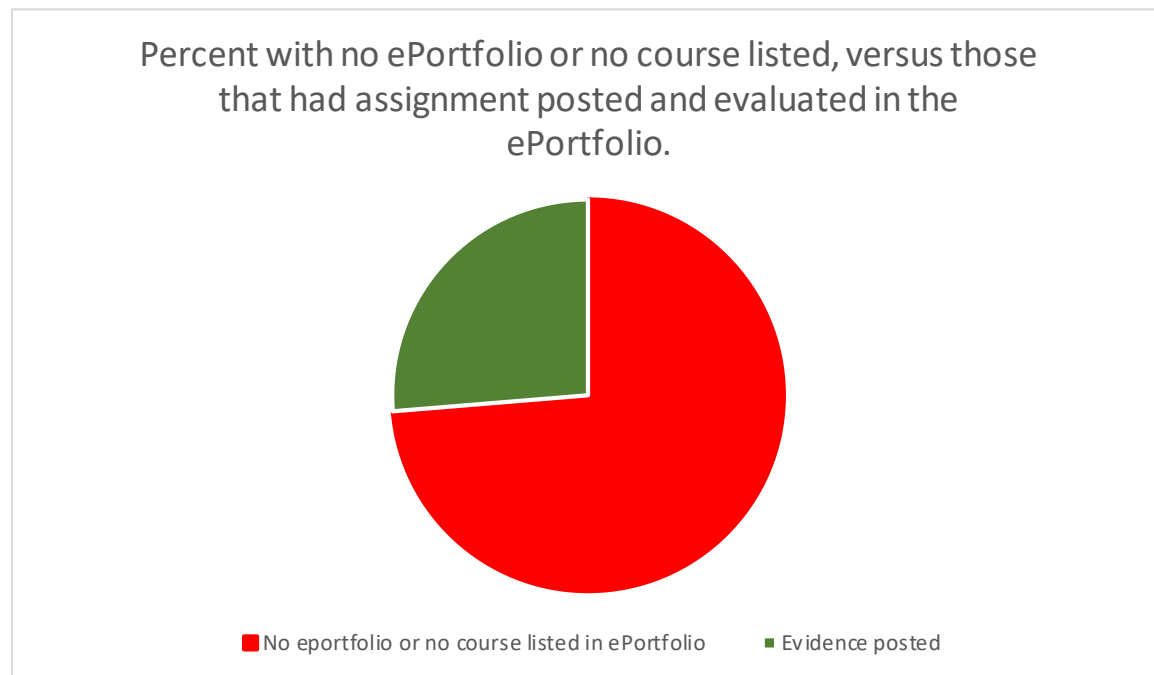
Summary of Scores by Criteria

Figure 2 shows the scores for assessing the broad categories of Civic Literacy, Critical Thinking, Working with Others, and Civic Action for the sample, drawn from the averages of the characteristic subcategories within each criteria.

Working with Others was the highest-ranking criteria with an average score of 1.04. Critical Thinking Surrounding Social Issues was the second-highest category with a score of 0.94. Assessors gave students an overall score of 0.81 for the criteria focused on developing Civic Literacy. The lowest ranking criteria were for Civic Action, with an overall average score of 0.74. Scores for Civic Literacy and Civic Action stayed the same, and Critical Thinking and Working with Others increased slightly from AY 18-19.

These results demonstrate that the SLCC students who are posting to their ePortfolio on average are beginning to learn how to work with others and engage in critical thinking. All the scores for the broad criteria averaged at or a little below a low level. Because these are averaged scores, some students may score relatively high, while others did not demonstrate any evidence. For many students, these service-learning courses are likely the first exposure they have had to civic engagement. Hence, an average low-level score is a positive sign that students in service-learning classes start developing this civic literacy outcome on average. However, these scores also indicate that there is plenty of room for improvement before developing competency. In comparing these scores, students appear to be more willing to work with diverse others than engaging in civic activity, with cognitive shifts in critical thinking and developing civic literacy in between, and still slightly below a low level on average.

Figure 2: Student Scores for Overall Criteria Areas

Average Scores by Criteria

Develop Civic Literacy 2018-2019: 0.8
2019-2020: 0.81

Critical Thinking around 2018-2019: 1.09
Social Issues 2019-2020: 0.94

Working with Others 2018-2019: 0.83
2019-2020: 1.04

Civic Action 2018-2019: 0.76
2019-2020: 0.74

0=no evidence, 1=low, 2=medium, 3=high

Summary of Scores by Characteristic Subcategories

Figures 3, 4, 5, and 6 show the average scores for each characteristic subcategory within each of the broad criteria. The highest subcategory overall was Perspective Taking. Students scored 1.16, indicating that when students post to their ePortfolio, they discuss their perspective and start to identify others' views on average. The second highest subcategory was Reflection on Values, Attitudes, and/or Beliefs at 1.09, indicating that reflection often accompanied posted ePortfolio assignments. The category focused on Knowledge of a Social Issued ranked third (score of 1.03), followed by Openness (0.92) and Sources of Responsibility or Commitment to Community Engagement (0.90). Students received slightly lower scores on Civic Knowledge through a Disciplinary Lens (0.83), Collaboration (0.80), and Knowledge of Agencies/Organizations that Address Social Issues (0.74). The rankings for Mutually Beneficial Relationships with Partners are 0.74, and the Breadth or Depth of Community Engagement Activities is at only 0.68. Awareness of Power Structures, Privilege/Oppression, and/or Systems When Trying to Address a Social Issue is a new category this year. Students scored an average of 0.66, the lowest of all the subcategories.

Figure 3: Student Scores for Civic Literacy Subcategories

In the Civic Knowledge category, students are evaluated on their knowledge of social issues and social change. For example, assessors determined if students discussed facts or issues focused on such things as civil rights, gender, race, disability, environmental justice or equity, etc. Gaining knowledge of agencies and organizations that deal with these social issues is also a focus. In AY 18-19, we used Knowledge of Democratic Structures as a category but further refined it to Awareness of Power Structures, Privilege/Oppression, or Systems When Trying to Address a Social Issue in AY 19-20. The category was refined for clarity and to add a more equity-minded focus. The categories can still loosely be compared.
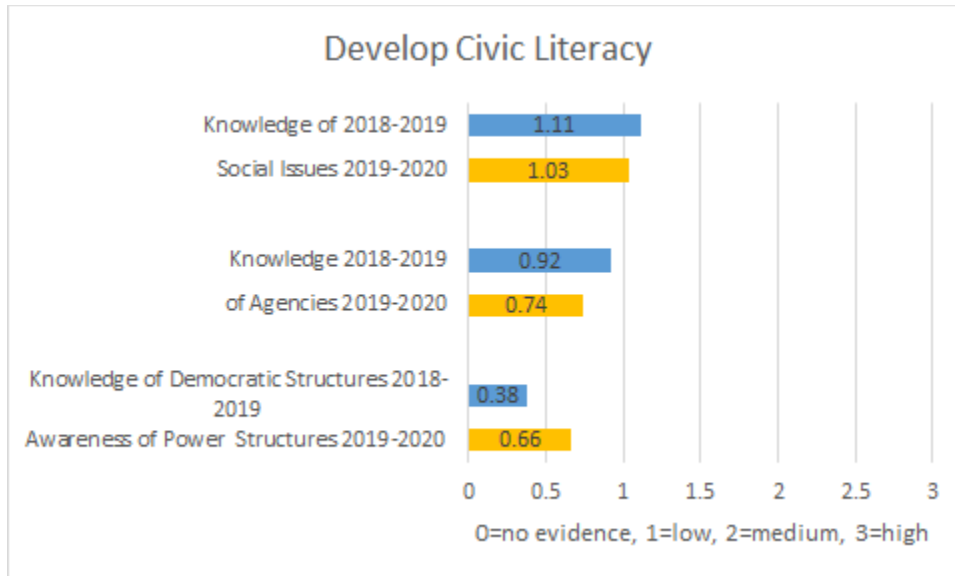
Develop Civic Literacy

	Score
Knowledge of 2018-2019	1.11
Social Issues 2019-2020	1.03
Knowledge 2018-2019	0.92
of Agencies 2019-2020	0.74
Knowledge of Democratic Structures 2018-2019	0.38
Awareness of Power Structures 2019-2020	0.66

0=no evidence, 1=low, 2=medium, 3=high

Figure 4: Student Scores for Critical Thinking Subcategories

Students take the knowledge gained in the Civic Literacy category and then critically analyze it in the Critical Thinking category, making relevant connections to learning in their course and their responsibility and commitment to community engagement. In this category, students also reflect on their personal values, attitudes, and beliefs in relation to others.
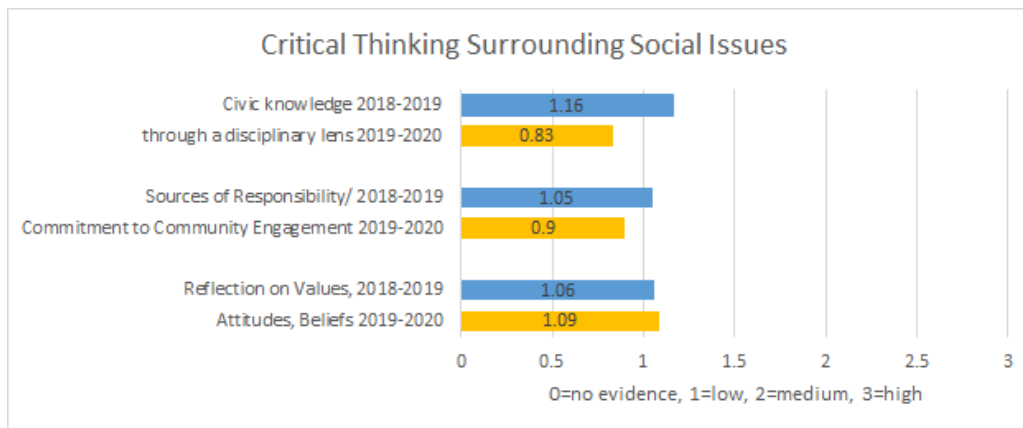
Critical Thinking Surrounding Social Issues

	Score
Civic knowledge 2018-2019	1.16
through a disciplinary lens 2019-2020	0.83
Sources of Responsibility/ 2018-2019	1.05
Commitment to Community Engagement 2019-2020	0.9
Reflection on Values, 2018-2019	1.06
Attitudes, Beliefs 2019-2020	1.09

0=no evidence, 1=low, 2=medium, 3=high

Figure 5: Student Scores for Working with Others Subcategories

In this category, students are evaluated on their ability to work with others. Are students able to see beyond their perspective and identify the perspectives of others? Students' ability to interact with diverse others and discuss norms and perspectives is also a focus.
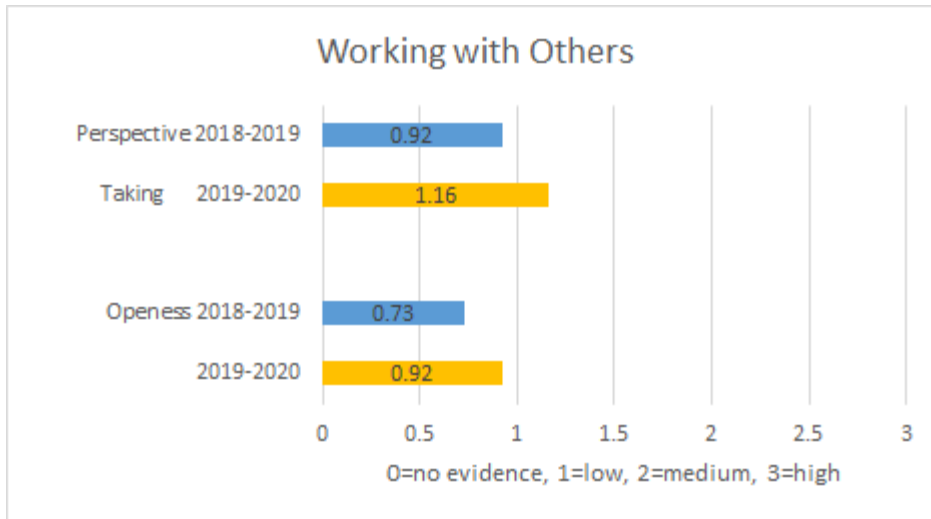
Figure 6: Student Scores for Civic Action Subcategories

In this category, how students participate in service in the community is evaluated. Breadth and depth are assessed based on the frequency of service and the ability to identify multiple civic action means. Students can participate in direct or indirect service, advocacy, activism, research, philanthropy, policy, and governance or corporate social responsibility (Stanford Haas Center for Public Service, 2020). This year, the mutually beneficial relationships category was further refined to focus on how students evaluate their project's impact on themselves and their partner.
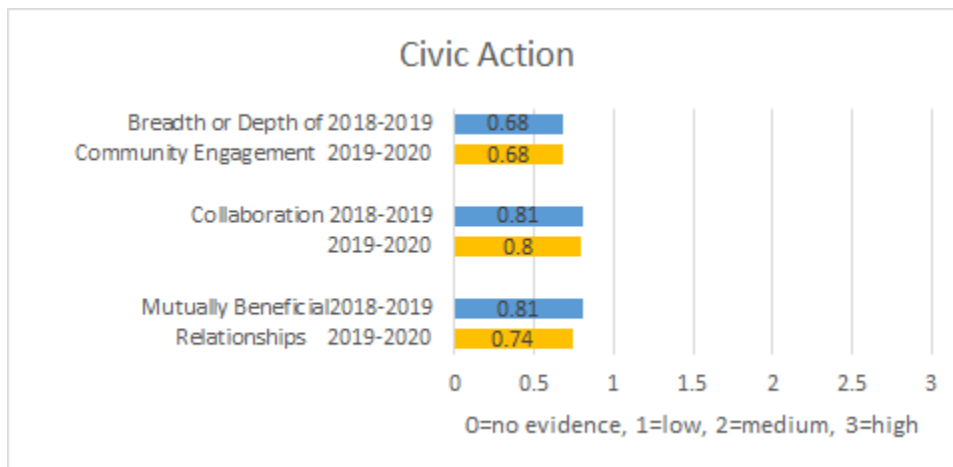
Learning Outside the Classroom

This category was removed for the 2019-2020 academic year since the guidelines for posting information are broad and could cover various topics. Therefore, it is difficult to assess this using the existing rubric, and it was determined to only evaluate one service-learning course as opposed to the whole ePortfolio.

Analysis of Findings and Recommendations

Findings

- Overall, most students are still not posting to their e-portfolios, and those who do often are not posting assignments or reflections specific to their service-learning course. Student scores remained relatively consistent with last year's scores and hovered around the low range, suggesting plenty of room for improvement. One explanation for these low scores is that students are not demonstrating their civic knowledge acquired through their service-learning, either because they are posting assignments and reflections focused on other aspects of the course or because they are not articulating their knowledge well in their projects and reflections. Alternatively, this may be the first opportunity students have to engage civically. A low level may be an accurate, and possibly even appropriate, level for introducing college students to civic engagement.
- In examining the scores by criteria, the Working with Others criteria was highest this year (1.04), compared to Critical Thinking Around Social Issues (1.09) last year. Both are in the low range with the others even lower, with Civic Action scoring the lowest (0.74) this year, consistent with the previous year (0.76)
- Students ranked highest in the Civic Literacy category, but still in the low range (1.03) on Knowledge of Social Issues, suggesting that they are starting to understand critical social issues. Gaining Knowledge of Agencies' scores dropped this year (0.74) compared to last year (0.92). There is no apparent reason for this drop and will continue to be examined in future years. Students are still struggling to understand the role of related power structures (0.66), the lowest subcategory of all this year (as was the related Knowledge of Democratic Structures last year at 0.38). There is still plenty of room for improvement in understanding or at least demonstrating Civic Literacy.
- In the Critical Thinking Surrounding Social Issues category, the highest scores were Reflection on Values, Attitudes, and Beliefs (1.09) and like last year (1.06). This may indicate that reflection is prioritized for most classes and is also a part of the ePortfolio template, so students are prompted in multiple ways to analyze their experiences. There was a drop in Civic Knowledge through a Disciplinary Lens (from 1.16 to 0.83), and there is no apparent reason for this drop and will continue to need to be examined in future years.
- In the Working with Others category, Perspective Taking was the highest-ranking subcategory overall (1.16). It increased from 18-19 (0.92), suggesting that this is an area that is developing for service-learning students but is still in the low range. Openness to Others is a little lower (0.92) but increased from last year (0.73). Student reflection often focuses more on their perspective shifts and what they learned from the experience, instead of focusing on the other. Hence, a change in reflection prompts may improve this to avoid falling into the typical, more self-focused pattern.
- The Civic Action criteria overall were the lowest ranking category of scores on the rubric (0.74), and the scores stayed consistent from last year (0.76). Given that all students are required to do service as a part of service-learning courses, and only service-learning classes were sampled, most students included in this sample likely participated in some service and/or civic engagement. Therefore, it appears that these students are not effectively highlighting their service work via their ePortfolio. For some service-learning courses, the uploaded assignments did not focus on civic engagement but instead concentrated on discipline-based content. The lowest score in this section was Breadth or Depth of Community Engagement, which makes some

sense as most service-learning courses only require one type of service project. Having a considerable breadth (or depth) of service experiences is difficult to fit into a single semester.

Recommendations

Overall, the findings demonstrate that faculty who teach service-learning courses should be more explicit in linking their course to the CLSLO and corresponding rubric. Recommendations include that faculty help students be more intentional about meeting these expectations and consistently posting to the ePortfolio, especially since almost 2/3 of the students did not post anything in their ePortfolio for the service-learning course selected. Also, there is considerable variability in the types of assignments students upload, which gives faculty the freedom to design the learning environment. Still, a more coordinated and intentional approach should result in a better program-wide assessment of student learning.

Given that all criteria and characteristic subcategories rank below or slightly above a low level, there are several additional recommendations based on the data in this report:

- **Collect, Connect, Reflect in ePortfolio:** With the limited number of ePortfolios containing service-learning assignments (36%), the assessment does not represent the SLCC service-learning student population. More students need to upload relevant assignments related to the CLSLO rubric to have an adequately large sample. Currently, existing service-learning faculty do not always require that the signature assignment posted in ePortfolio for their class focus on the CLSLO. Furthermore, all service-learning courses, even those that do not carry a General Education designation, should incorporate the ePortfolio into their curriculum. Making ePortfolio a requirement for the service-learning program is being considered.
- **Progress or Status Quo:** The average scores by criteria increased slightly from AY 17-18 to AY 18-19 but then remained mostly flat from AY 18-19 to AY 19-20. This may indicate that service-learning faculty are still not adopting the CLSLO rubric for their service-learning assignments since students are not addressing each criterion. Alternately, this may mean that sophomore students, by and large, are indeed only at a low level regarding their civic literacy.
- **Faculty Professional Development:** While recognizing faculty freedom to design service-learning assignments as they see fit, SLCC should continue to develop a more coordinated and intentional approach to service-learning faculty professional development. In-person faculty development workshops focusing on the CLSLO rubric have been offered but are limited. An online course in Canvas has been created and hopefully will reach more faculty because of a multi-pronged approach.
- **Reflection Prompts:** It would help address the areas that received lower scores and create additional prompts that help focus student reflection on these areas. We should also consider that student reflections rely heavily on the specific prompts provided on the ePortfolio web page. Often these prompts are focused on other student learning outcomes besides civic literacy and civic action. Therefore, the assignments evaluated may not adequately reflect the students' acquisition of these learning outcomes in their scores. We will provide suggestions for prompts designed to encourage reflection on civic engagement and are aligned with the CLSLO rubric to faculty members that teach service-learning courses to help facilitate student reflection.
- **The Need:** The other methods for assessing student learning outcomes on a course level through faculty submission through our institutional assessment office have not focused on the civic literacy learning outcome. Therefore, this learning outcome is not assessed in any other manner. It is essential to establish a method to evaluate this learning outcome via the service-learning

program hoping that the methods can be more broadly adopted to courses that generally focus on civic engagement in the future.

- **Confounding factors:** In March 2020, all courses moved online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some service-learning instructors moved in-person service to remote service. Some focused more on helping students develop civic knowledge, and some put civic action (e.g., the service component) on hold entirely. It is hard to say how this impacted our assessment efforts.

Guiding Resources:

Association of American Colleges and Universities. (2009). Civic Engagement VALUE rubric. Retrieved from https://www.aacu.org/civic-engagement-value-rubric

Stanford Haas Center Pathways to Public Service. Retrieved from https://haas.stanford.edu/about/our-approach/pathways-public-service-and-civic-engagement

Weiss, H.A., Hahn, T., and Norris, K. (2017). Civic Minded Graduate 2.0: Assessment Toolbox

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Appendix A: **Civic Literacy Student Learning Outcome Assessment Rubric**

Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Low	2-Medium	3-High
Develop civic literacy/ knowledge	Knowledge of a social issue	No evidence.	**Lists** some social issues or states basic details of a political, historical, economic, or sociological aspect of social change.	**Explains** social problem(s) or the political, historical, economic, sociological aspects of social change-or lack of change based on research with a social issue.	**Compares and contrasts** different perspectives and/or ideas detailing social problems or the political, historical, economic, sociological aspects of social change.
	Knowledge of agencies/ organizations that address social issues.	No evidence.	**Identify** agencie(s)/ organization(s) focused on addressing social issues.	**Describes** surface level characteristics agencie(s)/ organization(s) responsible for addressing social issues.	**Analyzes** relevant agencie(s)/ organization(s) by **explaining** in depth how they address a social issue.
	Awareness of power structures, privilege/ oppression and/or systems when trying to address a social issue.	No evidence.	**Describes** a few actions or processes (e.g., advocating, voting, boycotting, contacting elected officials, protesting) that can be taken to address social issues. Or **little to no mention** of the role of power, privilege/oppressi on, or systems (e.g., economic, administrative, social).	**Compare and contrast** the multiple actions or processes (e.g., advocating, voting, boycotting, contacting elected officials, protesting) that can be taken to address social issues. Or **describes** current or different power, privilege/oppressi on, or structures and systems (e.g., economic, administrative, social).	**Creates a plan** that involves multiple actions or processes (e.g., advocating, voting, boycotting, contacting elected officials, protesting) that can be taken to address social issues. Or **analyzes** current or different power structures, privilege/oppressi on, or systems (e.g., economic, administrative, social) in depth.

Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Low	2-Medium	3-High
Critical thinking surrounding social issues/ Capacity to become community-engaged learner	Civic knowledge through a disciplinary lens	No evidence.	**Identify** issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's own academic study/field/discipline to civic engagement or its impact on society.	**Explains** own perspective and may also identify with one other perspective on issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's academic study/field/ discipline making relevant connections/implications to civic engagement or its impact on society.	**Analyzes multiple perspectives** on issues (facts, theories, etc.) from one's academic study/field/ discipline to civic engagement or its impact on society.
	Source(s) of responsibility or commitment to community engagement	No evidence.	Mentions that they are required to do service for a class or as a part of a group. There are **little to no statements of responsibility** to commit time, talent, or resources to make a difference.	Mentions that they are required to do service for a class or as part of a group and expresses value in it. Student states that **responsibility to serve is derived from external norms**, authority, or expectations from others.	Mentions that they want to do service to support the community or society at large. Source of **responsibility is from internal motivations**.
	Reflection on values, attitudes, and/or beliefs	No evidence.	**Little to no reflection on personal values**, attitudes, and beliefs.	**Aware of personal values,** attitudes, and beliefs in relation to others.	**Critically examines personal values,** attitudes, and beliefs in relation to others.
Working with others	Perspective-taking	No evidence.	**States** own perspective (i.e., cultural, disciplinary, and ethical).	**Explains** own perspectives and identifies perspectives of others.	**Analyses** multiple perspectives for points of commonalties and differences.
	Openness	No evidence.	**Expresses willingness** or participates in interaction with diverse others.	**Demonstrates a willingness** to interact with diverse others and discusses norms and perspectives of themselves and/or others.	**Actively seeks out interactions** with diverse others and expresses the value of other perspectives or explains how their perspective has shifted.

Criteria	Characteristic	0-No evidence	1-Low	2-Medium	3-High
Civic Action/ Students act in mutually beneficial ways	Breadth or depth of community engagement (e.g., direct, indirect, advocacy, activism, research, philanthropy, policy and governance, social responsibility)	No evidence.	Participated in **one type** of community-engaged activity. Or completed minimum hours without any mention of continuation.	Participated in **at least one type of community engagement and identifies one additional type(s)** of community-engaged activities. Or completed additional hours or multiple types of projects.	Participated in **at least one type of community engagement activity and explains two or more types** of community engaged activities. Or describes plans for continued civic engagement.
	Collaboration	No evidence.	**Does not identify a community need** or only talks about the partner or community from a personal perspective.	**Cites information about the partner(s)** or community need collected from a third-party or web research.	**Describes personal communication with the partner** or the community where they learned about a community need.
	Mutually beneficial relationship with partners or the community	No evidence.	Discusses experience from **one perspective** and/or is only doing it because it is required.	**Expresses limited value for themselves AND can express limited value for the community** partner/community.	**Expresses how the experience influenced them AND impacted the partner** and/or community on a larger level.

Revised 10/14/20