

Student Learning Outcomes for NOVA's Disciplines

Research Report No. 70-18

Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success
OCTOBER 2018

NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
OFFICE OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS AND STUDENT SUCCESS

The purpose of the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success is to conduct analytical studies and provide information in support of institutional planning, policy formulation, and decision making. In addition, the office provides leadership and support in research related activities to members of the NOVA community engaged in planning and evaluating the institution's success in accomplishing its mission.

When citing data from this report, the Northern Virginia
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Introduction

As part of the current nation-wide movement to increase accountability and transparency in higher education, Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) has made the assessment of student learning outcomes a priority. Assessment is defined as “the ongoing process of:

- Establishing clear, measurable expected *outcomes* of student learning.
- Ensuring that students have sufficient *opportunities* to achieve those outcomes.
- Systematically gathering, analyzing, and interpreting *evidence* to determine how well student learning matches our expectations.
- Using the resulting information to understand and *improve* student learning.”¹

To begin the process of assessing student learning, programs must first determine the student learning outcomes for their curriculum. Student learning outcomes are defined as “the accumulated knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students develop during a course of study.”²

NOVA determined that all degree-awarding programs and select certificates must each designate one faculty member to oversee the program’s/certificate’s assessment efforts. In order to provide support to programs and their designated faculty (called SLO Lead Faculty), the Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives (OIR) regularly offers workshops devoted to writing and assessing student learning outcomes and using results from student learning outcomes to improve student learning. Since beginning these workshops in Spring 2009, each program has had at least one faculty member attend a session. Additionally, OIR provides a variety of online resources to support the SLO assessment process.³

In Fall 2009, SLO Lead Faculty submitted student learning outcomes for their respective programs/certificates. Programs are asked to review their SLOs annually and update them when necessary. The most recent student learning outcomes have been compiled into this report. As defined above, establishing student learning outcomes is only the first step in the ongoing cycle of assessment. Once student learning outcomes are established programs develop methods to assess the student learning outcomes and gather data to make evidence-based decisions to increase student learning. Information from these assessments are detailed each year in the Annual Planning and Evaluation Reports; these reports can be found online at <https://www.nvcc.edu/college-planning/reports.html>.

¹ Linda Suskie, *Assessing Student Learning: A Common Sense Guide*. Anker Publishing, 2004.

² For more information, see <http://web.virginia.edu/iaas/assess/resources/learningoutcomes.shtml>.

³ For more information, see <http://www.nvcc.edu/assessment/index.html>.

Student Learning Outcomes for NOVA's Disciplines

Biology

Faculty Department Chair: Gillian Backus, MA

Lead Dean: Dr. Diane Mucci, MA

- Students will apply the scientific method and identify methods of inquiry that lead to scientific knowledge.
- Students will identify laboratory safety guidelines relating to working with chemicals, microorganisms, body fluids and/or dissection.
- Students will apply the principles of heredity.
- Students will be able to use standard laboratory techniques to describe and quantify compounds or objects.
- Students will be able to write using scientific terminology to explain the structure and function of a cell.
- Students will be able to effectively work in small groups and in a collaborative environment.
- Students will use graphical methods to organize and interpret data.
- Students will be able to effectively use resources from databases.

Chemistry

Faculty Department Chair: Mitra Jahangeri, LO

Lead Dean: Alison Thimblin, WO

- Students will be able to perform measurements and calculations with correct significant figures.
- Students will be able to identify the number of protons, neutrons and electrons of elements from the periodic table.
- Students will explain the atomic structure of elements emphasizing the electron configuration of atoms and chemical periodicity.
- Students will be able to write the name and formulas of inorganic compounds.
- Students will be able to write and balance chemical equations.
- Students will be able to write the name and formulas of organic compounds.
- Students will be able to recognize the characteristic structures of biochemical compounds.
- Students will be able to perform calculations involving stoichiometry.
- Students will be able to perform calculations involving thermochemistry.
- Students will be able to perform calculations involving solution concentrations.
- Students will be able to perform calculations involving pH.
- Students will be able to identify the bonding, molecular structure and polarity of given compounds or molecules.
- Students will be able to perform calculations for ideal gases.
- Students will be able to perform calculations involving Chemical Equilibrium.
- Students will be able to perform calculations involving reaction rates.
- Students will be able to perform calculations involving electrochemical cells.
- Students will be able to predict the effect of various stresses on equilibrium systems.
- Students will be able to identify the bonding, isomerism, and molecular structure in organic compounds.

- Students will be able to identify the specific types of reactions of organic compounds.
- Students will be able to use information from spectral data to deduce the structure of the organic compounds.
- Students will be able to write equations for reactions involving multi-step synthesis of various classes of organic compounds.
- Students will use graphical methods to organize and interpret data.

Theater

Faculty Department Chair: Lucy Gebre-Egziabher, AL; Mr. Bryan Brown, WO

Lead Dean: Jimmie McClellan, AL; Mr. David Epstein, WO

- Students will demonstrate the ability to define theater vocabulary, use acting and theatrical terminology in rehearsal and/or performance, identify the common elements and vocabulary of theater and of the interaction of these elements, use stage directions in performance, label parts of the stage, define theatrical genres, communicate effectively with members of the production team.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to analyze a script for performance and production, identify characters' objectives; the play's structure, style, conflict, crisis, and climax, identify the technical needs and requirements indicated by the script, state the theme and how it is illustrated throughout the play.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to prepare and present material to an audience, create a fully realized character by analyzing the physical, societal, psychological, and moral aspects of the character/role, sustain character in performance: plot, sub-text, mood, atmosphere and dramatic tension, perform a credible character appropriate to the style, form or period of the script.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to illustrate the organization of a theatrical event, identify the roles and responsibilities of the production team and its members, complete a production assignment for a public performance, complete critical reviews with reference to elements such as style, plot and structure of performances viewed.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to illustrate the technical phases of theater, apply appropriate technical elements of stagecraft such as costume designs, set designs, research, lighting, sound, and make-up to a performance.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to discuss the impact of theater on a variety of cultures and society, label the major theatrical developments in various historical periods, identify major social and political developments within each historical context, utilize the skills and techniques needed to conduct research into the culture, history, and style of a particular period for a public performance.

Economics

Faculty Department Chair: Edward G. Creppy

Lead Dean: Hemchand Gossai, AN

- Students will be able to apply the accepted body of economic principles to current economic issues.
- Students will be able to evaluate U.S. economic policy in the context of economic principles.
- Students will be able to interpret economic knowledge and terminology in their own verbal and written work.
- Students will be able to critique media coverage of economic topics and events.

- Students will be able to perform basic mathematical operations as applied to economic problems.
- Students will be able to analyze graphs, tables, and statistical economic data.
- Students will be able to differentiate amongst economic facts, opinions, assumptions, and inferences as they pertain to economic topics.
- Students will be able to evaluate the decisions of economic actors within the context of current economic theory.
- Students will understand the impact of science and technology and will develop skills needed to use modern technology.
- Students will be able to identify the impact of science and technology on economic outcomes.
- Students will be able to retrieve economic information and data from a variety of web-based resources and databases.
- Students will be able to contrast the values and attitudes commensurate with the market-oriented U.S. economy to those found in a variety of other economic systems.
- Students will be able to critique political, historical, and social issues from an economic perspective.
- Students will be able to evaluate the importance of education, training, and experience as they affect personal economic desires and outcomes.
- Students will be able to describe how economic knowledge improves an individual's ability to function as both an economic agent and a member of a community.

English

Faculty Department Chair: Ms. Elizabeth Harlan, AN (regular ENG); Ms. Chris Kervina, AN (dev. ENG)

Lead Dean: Dr. Jennifer Daniels, AN

- Students will produce writing that is clear, effective, and appropriate to the nature of the assignment.
- Students will analyze written, oral, and/or visual texts.
- Students will explain a variety of literary forms, styles, structures, and modes.
- Students will integrate evidence and competing primary and/or secondary claims effectively into argument-based writing (or other assignments)
- Students will integrate and document appropriate sources within their own academic writing, following MLA style guidelines.
- Students will articulate the connections between texts and their historical and cultural context.

English Specializations (Literature)

Faculty Department Chair: Ms. Elizabeth Harlan, AN (regular ENG); Ms. Chris Kervina, AN (dev. ENG)

Lead Dean: Dr. Jennifer Daniels, AN

- Students will apply the fundamental elements of [rhetoric and/or craft] to produce writing that is clear, effective, and appropriate to the nature of their assignment (CR, L, CW)
- Students will analyze written, oral, and visual texts (CR, L, CW)
- Students will explain a variety of literary forms, styles, structures, and modes (L)

- Students will integrate evidence and competing primary and/or secondary claims effectively into argument-based writing (or other assignments) (CR, L)
- Students will use interpretive methods.
- Students will integrate and document appropriate sources within their own academic writing, following MLA style guidelines. (CR, L)
- Students will articulate the connections between texts and their historical and cultural context (CR, L)
- Students will use critical approaches to evaluate major literary works (L)

Note: Composition and Rhetoric (CR), Literature (L), and Creative Writing (CW).

English as a Second Language

Faculty Department Chair: Janice Hornyak, AL

Lead Dean: Dr. Jennifer Daniels, AN

- Reading SLO: After reading an article, students will be able to accurately summarize the main idea and the details that support it.
- Speaking SLO: Students will be able to give academic presentations.
- Listening SLO: Students are able to comprehend the main idea, major points, and important details of academic speeches of up to ten minutes in length.
- Critical Reading SLO: Students will be able to draw inferences from text.
- Writing SLO: Given a writing prompt, students will be able to write a multi-paragraph academic essay.

Geography

Faculty Department Chair: Melinda Alexander, AL

Lead Dean: Katherine Hitchcock, LO

- Apply critical spatial thinking skills to accurately read and interpret maps.
- Analyze visual representations of data such as climographs and cross-sections.
- Analyze maps and explain the significance of and connections among natural physiographic and human-made features in space, scale and time.
- Compare and contrast diverse human societies in terms of their economic activities and environmental sustainability.
- Identify locales impacted by climate change and explain the significance of the changes.
- Demonstrate an appreciation and respect for the diversity of perspectives, world-views, and cultures.

Geology

Faculty Department Chair: Erik Burtis, WO

Lead Dean: Barbara Canfield, LO

- Name the three types of rock and the ways in which each typically forms.
- Describe the basic parts of the process of evolution.
- Describe the origin and physiography of ocean basins.
- Summarize the distribution and life style of marine organisms.
- Define key events and stages in the evolutionary history of complex life.

- For the common rock forming minerals, identify hand samples using physical characteristics and diagnostic properties.
- Describe the human (anthropogenic) influence on climate.

History

Faculty Department Chair: William Howe
Lead Dean: Mary Ann Schmitt

- Identify the impact that art and the humanities have had on specific individuals and/or cultures.
- Evaluate primary and/or secondary documents for their credibility and/or use in explaining the past.
- Connect contemporary events and/or culture to historical context.
- Identify relevant historical ideas, figures, and/or developments for American history.
- Identify relevant historical ideas, figures, and/or developments for Western Civilizations.
- Identify relevant historical ideas, figures, and/or developments for World civilizations

Humanities

Faculty Department Chair:
Lead Dean: Dr. Jimmie McClellan, AL

- Recognize historical periods by their great cultural productions.
- Analyze major texts across historical periods.
- Identify societal values and history according to specific cultural productions.
- Research into works of art and their relationship to the history and culture that produced them.
- Recognize major artistic accomplishments of the past.
- Make connections between contemporary human experience and the past.
- Analyze and interpret how societies organize identificatory conditions such as race, gender and class.
- Analyze and interpret stylistic changes in works of art according to history and culture.

Math

Faculty Department Chair: Ms. Vaden Fitton, AL
Lead Dean: Dr. Alison Thimblin, WO

- Interpret mathematical results and communicate them to others.
- Solve applied problems.
- Choose an appropriate mathematical method to solve problems.
- Construct and analyze graphs.
- Assess the reasonableness of their solutions.
- Use technology as a tool in problem solving.
- Formulate and analyze functions.

Philosophy

Faculty Department Chair: Dr. David Brown, AL
Lead Dean: Dr. Jimmie McClellan, AL

- Define the term “Philosophy” with an explanation of the many philosophical issues involved in the very attempt to do so, and identify instances in the real world where these issues are relevant.
- Distinguish such typical philosophical terms as epistemology, metaphysics, and ethics, and demonstrate how each of these branches of philosophy can be brought to bear on problems relevant to the real world.
- Identify and critically inspect the positions taken by great philosophers on typical philosophical questions.
- Analyze a philosophical argument for persuasiveness, logical consistency, and applicability to other arguments and issues, and apply this understanding to the construction of philosophical arguments which deal with real situations.
- Appraise the importance of philosophy as the systematic questioning of basic assumptions and identify some basic assumptions of their own to which philosophy can be applied.
- Distinguish philosophy from other disciplines, such as the other humanities and the sciences, establish the relationships between philosophy and other ways of knowing.

Religion

Faculty Department Chair: Dr. David Brown, AL
Lead Dean: Dr. Jimmie McClellan, AL

- Describe the scope of and engage in the academic study of religion.
- Define key concepts and terms related to the study of religion.
- Explain the complex relationship between religion and society/culture in various historical and contemporary contexts.
- Interpret the primary texts of one or more religious traditions.
- Describe the basic teachings and key practices and values of one or more religious traditions.
- Compare and contrast common themes across two or more religious traditions.
- Visit a previously unfamiliar religious events/community and report on that experience.

Physics

Faculty Department Chair: Dr. Francesca Viale, LO; Stephen Wissing, LO
Lead Dean: Dr. Barbara Canefield, LO

- Students will demonstrate the principles of physics in the analyses of physical problems.
- Students will identify which physics concepts are applicable to a given problem and execute the necessary steps in order to obtain a solution.
- Students will apply their mathematical knowledge to physics-related problems.
- Students will use established scientific methods to organize and interpret experimental data.
- Students will be able to read and critically analyze their observations and measurements.

- Students will be able to interpret correctly the meaning of quantitative and mathematical symbols.
- Students will be able to communicate appropriately and effectively on scientific topics.

Political Science

Faculty Department Chair: Dr. Jack Lechelt, AL

Lead Dean: Dr. Ivy Beringer, AL

- Students will be able to identify and describe the political institutions and processes of the government of the United States.
- Students will be able to compare and contrast political institutions within the United States with those of foreign governments.
- Students will be able to recognize the methods, approaches, or theories used in accumulating and interpreting information applicable to the discipline of political science.
- Students will be able to defend a theoretical argument in a written or oral format.
- Students will develop basic research skills necessary to write a paper in the discipline of political science.
- Students will be able to define basic concepts and approaches to international relations including current, historic, and geographical applications as relates to the current global system structure.
- Students will be able to identify the major subfields in political science: American politics, Comparative politics, International relations, and political theory.

Psychology

Faculty Department Chair: Megan Davies, WO

Lead Dean: Katherine Hitchcock, LO

- Students will differentiate the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, historical trends, and empirical findings in psychological science.
- Students will apply the major concepts, theoretical perspectives, historical trends, and empirical findings in psychological science to real world examples.
- Students will differentiate elements of the scientific method, types of research methodology, and skills and errors in critical thinking and problem-solving.
- Students will apply scientific reasoning and critical thinking in the understanding, interpretation, and/or evaluation of behavior, information, and research.
- Students will identify ethical standards in psychological science and practice.
- Students will “apply ethical standards to evaluate psychological science and practice.” (APA, 2013, p. 26)
- Students will identify diverse influences of culture on individuals and psychological phenomena.
- Students will apply knowledge of “individual and cultural diversity” (APA, 2013, p. 27) to evaluate behavior, information and research.

Student Development

Faculty Department Chair: Ms. Margarita Martinez, AN; Ms. Twyla Jones, AL
Lead Dean: Dean of Students

- Career Exploration and Development: Students will articulate three potential careers based on their interests, values, and abilities.
- College Resources/Student Services: Students will identify and describe three offices/services that are available to them.
- Academic Planning/Curricular Offerings: Students will be able to distinguish between university parallel/transfer and applied programs.
- Academic Planning/Curricular Offerings: Students will select the appropriate curriculum and electives within that curriculum based on their career goal(s).
- Academic Skills/Learning Styles: Students will review multiple learning styles and identify their preferred learning style.
- Critical Thinking Skills: Students will articulate three aspects of critical thinking such as: identifying faulty logic, problem-solving, asking questions/probing etc.
- Life Management/Financial Literacy: Students will articulate the benefits and risks of three aspects (e.g. credit, savings, and budgeting) of money management.
- Social and Interpersonal/Community Skills: Students will identify three elements of effective community (e.g. active listening, verbal and non-verbal messages, etc.).
- Wellness/Stress Management: Students will identify three techniques/strategies for managing anxiety/stress.

Sociology

Faculty Department Chair: Lisa Riggleman-Gross, WO
Lead Dean: Christopher Arra, WO

- Students will identify major theoretical approaches in sociology.
- Students will apply the major theoretical approaches to analyze everyday life.
- Students will use the sociological imagination to analyze their lives and the social world.
- Students will be able to compare the ways in which different cultures understand aspects of social life such as gender, religion, ethnicity, class, and sexuality.
- Students will identify the main methods of data collection and analysis in sociology.
- Students will identify core concepts of cultural analysis such as cultural relativism, ethnocentrism, material culture, values.

World Languages (Arabic)

Faculty Department Chair: Ms. Martha Davis, AL; Ms. Amanda Trostle, AL
Lead Dean: Dr. Jimmie McClellan, AL

- Understanding long sentences, short text utterances on a variety of topics related to basic personal background, interests and needs, as well as social and cultural conventions of Arabic-speaking societies.
- Students are also expected to understand simple radio and television announcements.
- Perform a variety of uncomplicated basic communicative tasks in social situations, such as talking about self, family, and other daily routine.

- The students are also expected to ask and answer questions in a simple conversation on both general topics and those related to the culture of Arabic speaking countries.
- Read with more accelerated speed and better comprehension simple and short straight- forward descriptive texts on topics such as: [topics].
- Write a short, simple essay, journal or letter to express personal experiences like daily routine, school activities, friends, family, trips, and hobbies.
- The students will be able to use the present, past and future tenses with consistency.
- Expanding on the cultural dimension of the language in order to meet the ACTFL standards in culture which include connections, comparisons, and communities. As a result to that, students are expected to read, discuss, and write about topics concerning the Arabic-speaking cultures illustrated in textbooks and in the Arabic media at an intermediate level.
- Discuss the impact of history on Arabic culture in general and on the Arabic dialects specifically.
- Learn about the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the targeted culture.
- Use the language both within and beyond the school setting.
- Compare some aspects of the Arabic culture with the students' own cultures.

World Languages (French)

Faculty Department Chair: Ms. Martha Davis, AL; Ms. Amanda Trostle, AL

Lead Dean: Dr. Jimmie McClellan, AL

- The student sustains understanding over long stretches of speech.
- The student sustains understanding on a variety of topics pertaining to different times and places; however understanding of authentic texts may still be incomplete.
- The student can initiate, sustain, and close a general conversation, although errors may be evident.
- The student will be able to use circumlocution to compensate for limited vocabulary.
- Student will use connected discourse, particularly for simple narration or description.
- The speaker will generally be understood even by natives not accustomed to dealing with speakers at this level, although repetition may still be required.
- The student will grasp main ideas and information from texts featuring description and narration.
- The student will understand authentic material such as newspaper or magazine articles upon reading them more than once.
- The student can take notes in some detail on familiar topics and respond in writing to personal questions.
- The student can write simple letters, brief synopses and paraphrases, summaries of biographical data, work, cultural and school experience.
- The student begins to describe and narrate in coherent paragraphs.
- The student's writing, though faulty, is generally comprehensible to natives used to the writing of non-native.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the culture studied.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between the products and perspectives of the culture studied.
- Acquire information and recognize the distinctive viewpoints that are only available through the foreign language and its cultures.

- Demonstrate understanding of the concept of culture through comparisons of the cultures studied and their own.
- Use the language both within and beyond the school setting. Read, discuss and write about topics concerning the francophone cultures featured in textbooks and in target language media at the intermediate level.

World Languages (Spanish)

Faculty Department Chair: Ms. Martha Davis, AL; Ms. Amanda Trostle, AL

Lead Dean: Dr. Jimmie McClellan, AL

- Students will participate in conversations generally limited to those predictable and concrete exchanges necessary for survival in the target culture. These include personal information related to self, family, home, daily activities, interests and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food shopping, travel and lodging.
- Students will be able to ask a variety of questions when necessary to obtain simple information to satisfy basic needs, such as directions, prices and services.
- Students will also express personal meaning by creating with the language, in part by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to produce responses typically consisting of sentences and strings of sentences, primarily in present time with references to other time frames.
- Students will write loosely connected texts about personal preferences, daily routines, common events and other personal topics. Students will show evidence of control of basic sentence structure and verb forms. They will primarily in present time using basic vocabulary and structures to express meaning that is comprehensible to those accustomed to the writing of non-natives.
- Students will respond to information conveyed in simple, sentence-length speech on familiar or everyday topics containing high-frequency vocabulary.
- Students will answer questions about short, predictable, non-complex texts that convey basic information and deal with basic personal and social topics to which they bring personal interest or knowledge, although some misunderstandings may occur.
- Students will be able to write a description of a holiday celebrated in a Spanish-speaking country or community, such as Carnaval, El Día de los Muertos or Nochebuena, and compare it to a holiday celebrated by the dominant culture of the United States.

PATHWAY TO THE AMERICAN DREAM—NOVA'S STRATEGIC PLAN 2017-2023

THE NOVA COMMITMENT

As its primary contributions to meeting the needs of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the Northern Virginia Community College pledges to advance the social and economic mobility of its students while producing an educated citizenry for the 21st Century.

THE STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To deliver on this commitment NOVA will focus its creativity and talent, its effort and energy, and its resources and persistence, on achieving three overarching goals—success, achievement, and prosperity. It will strive to enable **Every Student to Succeed, Every Program to Achieve, and Every Community to Prosper.**

To advance the completion agenda described above, thereby promoting students' success and enhancing their social mobility, ensuring that programs achieve, and producing an educated citizenry for the 21st Century, the following goals and objectives are adopted:

GOAL 1: Every Student Succeeds

- **Objective 1:** Develop a College-wide approach to advising that ensures all students are advised and have access to support throughout their time at NOVA
- **Objective 2:** Implement VIP-PASS System as the foundational technology based on NOVA Informed Pathways for student self-advising, assignment and coordination of advisors, and course registration

GOAL 2: Every Program Achieves

- **Objective 3:** Develop comprehensive, fully integrated Informed Pathways for every program to ensure seamless transitions from high school and other entry points to NOVA, and from NOVA to four-year transfer institutions or the workforce
- **Objective 4:** Develop effective processes and protocols for programmatic College-wide collective decisions that include consistent, accountable leadership and oversight of each academic program with designated "owners," active advisory committees, clear student learning outcomes and assessments, and program reviews in all modalities of instruction
- **Objective 5:** Align NOVA's organizational structures, position descriptions, and expectations for accountability with its overarching mission to support student engagement, learning, success and institutional effectiveness

GOAL 3: Every Community Prospers

- **Objective 6:** Enhance the prosperity of every community in Northern Virginia by refocusing and prioritizing NOVA's workforce development efforts
- **Objective 7:** Further develop NOVA's IT and Cybersecurity programs to support regional job demand and position NOVA as the leading IT community college in the nation
- **Objective 8:** Re-envision workforce strategies and integrate workforce development into a NOVA core focus
- **Objective 9:** Plan to expand the breadth and reach of NOVA's healthcare and biotechnology programs, and prioritize future programs to support regional economic development goals

NOVA

**Northern Virginia
Community College**

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