

Update on Assessment of General Education

This report updates the [assessment](#) of General Education through the analysis of program-level student learning outcomes, or [GELOs](#). GELO 1 (Content Knowledge) is assessed through the biennial assessment process in which departments and programs provide assessment data for each of their Gen Ed courses that are reviewed by faculty serving on the General Education Improvement and Assessment Committee (a standing Faculty Senate Committee). The Office of Institutional Effectiveness coordinates the process.

GELOs 2-4 are assessed by examining [signature assignments](#) (SAs), which require students to integrate and apply course content (GELO 4) to address an issue related to personal or social responsibility (GELO 3) through an intellectual tool (GELO 2). The SA assessment is performed by multiple volunteer faculty pairs working with the Director of General Education and the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. At the end of fall 2021, the OIE randomly selected 50 SAs from the spring and fall semesters of 2021 for assessment of student achievement on GELOs 2-4. The Director of General Education applied rubrics derived from the operational definitions of the GELOs to each SA. The OIE then extracted from Canvas the SAs from ~10 students in each course. One of the eight pairs of faculty reviewers coded each student on the rubric in January 2022. This update reviews SA assessments from 2018 through 2021. To date, dozens of faculty reviewers have volunteered and been trained as coders, the SAs from more than 180 Gen Ed courses representing every core and breadth area and WSU courses have been reviewed, and the SAs of more than 2000 students have been assessed. The incredible average interrater reliability (~.9) for all three GELOs affirms that reviewers are consistent in their coding.

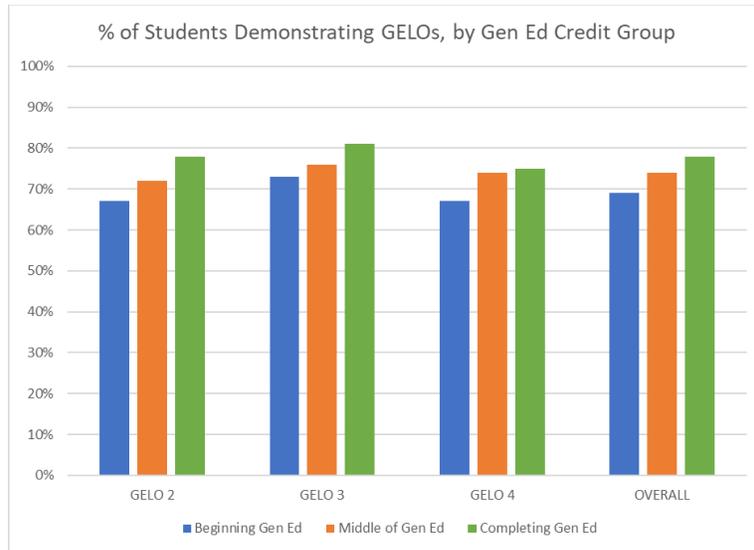
Overall, GELO scores were positively correlated with students' final Gen Ed class grade ($r = .18, p < .001$), and their overall WSU GPA ($r = .19, p < .001$), independent of their academic status (i.e., freshman, sophomore, junior, senior) and number of prior Gen Ed credits. Analyses suggest that students who better learn content knowledge, as reflected by their grades in Gen Ed and other courses, also tend to demonstrate general Gen Ed learning skills, independent of their background and experience. Results suggest that SAs assess skills related to student learning.

Analyses also explored differences in GELO assessment scores based on student status in the Gen Ed program. We grouped students according to the number of Gen Ed credits completed in previous semesters:

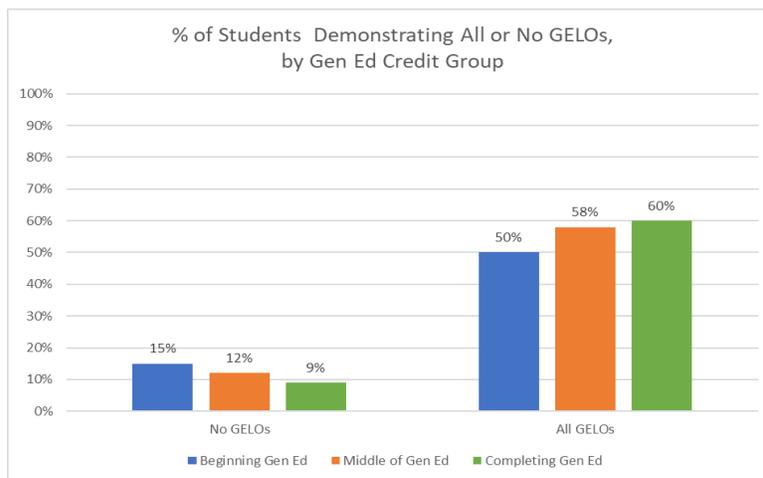
- Students **beginning** Gen Ed coursework, who had earned 9 or fewer Gen Ed credits (N=716, 64% freshmen)
- Students in the **middle** of their Gen Ed coursework, who had earned 10-29 Gen Ed credits (N=860, 75% freshman and sophomores)
- Students **completing** Gen Ed, who had earned 30 or more Gen Ed credits (N=399, 64% juniors, and seniors)

The figure below shows the percentage of students demonstrating each GELO and the overall average assessment score (computed as the sum of GELO scores for each student) by Gen Ed Credit Group. More students achieved GELO 3 (M = 76%) than GELO 2 (M = 71%) and GELO 4 (M = 71%). The differences between Gen Ed Credit Groups on overall GELO achievement are statistically significant, independent of students' academic status, suggesting that these differences

are irrespective of their college course work. Beginning students had a significantly lower overall GELO achievement rate than students who are in the middle of their Gen Ed program and completing students, with the latter two groups being marginally significantly different. The results suggest that the increase in GELO achievement is not simply a result of more experienced students who completed more college credits.

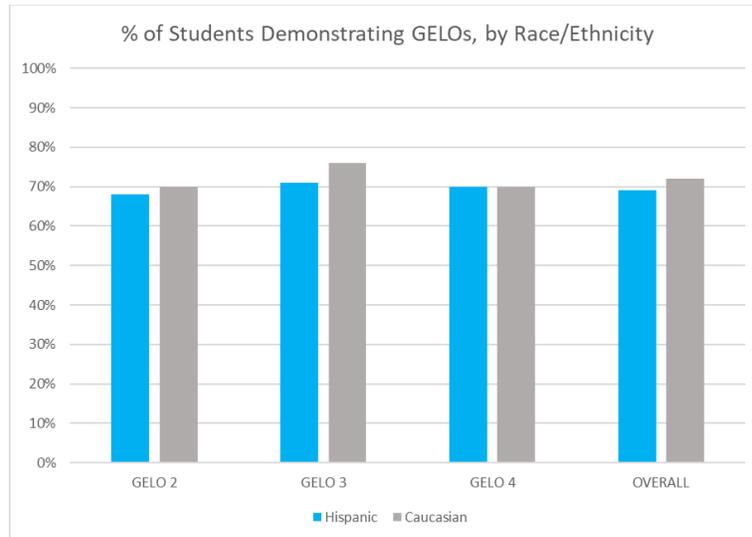


As further evidence of the performance differences between Credit Groups, a significantly higher percentage of students beginning (15%) as compared to completing (9%) Gen Ed achieved no GELOs. Similarly, a significantly lower percentage of students beginning (50%) as compared to completing students completing (60%) achieved all three GELOs. However, only the difference between groups of students achieving All GELOS was significantly different controlling for student academic status. The data suggest that the increase in achieving all GELOs may be independent of overall credits earned, but the decrease in students receiving no credits may reflect such experiences.



Finally, we disaggregated students' SA performance to explore equity gaps in GELO achievement. To disaggregate GELO achievement rates, we compared Caucasian (N= 1240, 70% freshmen or

sophomores) and Hispanic/Latino students (N=222, 70% freshmen and sophomores), the two largest ethnic groups in the sample¹. Analyses revealed no significant differences by race/ethnicity on the individual or overall GELO achievement. Furthermore, there were no group differences in background variables, including previous Gen Ed credits, overall GPA, and grade in the Gen Ed course.



The data provide preliminary support that the Gen Ed program outcomes are being effectively assessed and, perhaps, promoted by signature assignments. Student GELO achievement was reliably coded by volunteer faculty reviewers and related to academic outcomes (e.g., course grade, overall GPA) but not ethnicity. There is a pattern of improvement in student GELO achievement (both their average and complete GELO achievement rate) among those just beginning and completing the Gen Ed program, unrelated to their student status, which reflects credits earned in college. As noted, additional longitudinal evidence is needed before affirming that the improvement in GELO achievement can be attributed to students performing signature assignments and not to other factors (e.g., attrition).

¹ A secondary analysis that included more subgroups revealed the same results.