To: Office of Assessment and Accreditation
From: Angela Mitchell and Jan Rieman
Re: Scholarship of Assessment Grant Recipient Report
Date: August 24, 2020

What we learned
We undertook this project because our bi-annual first-year writing (FYW) program assessment data were not providing us with enough helpful information. This past year's FYW assessment was impacted by the difficulty of scoring substantially different assessment artifacts submitted by faculty, many which were unconnected to the required portfolio. Further, our comparison data from the past three cycles of FYW assessment show consistent scoring averages of 2.3, placing 46% of our students in the low "Proficient" range on our rubric. In Fall 2019, 67% of UWRT students earned an "A." We are interested in discovering how much this discrepancy between grades and scores relates to the lack of a common assessment artifact. Implementing the reflective essay for FYW assessment will likely move us closer to a more accurate scoring of portfolios in FYW. T We wanted to accomplish several things with this project: 1) re-write our FYW student learning outcomes; 2) create a shared portfolio assignment for faculty volunteers to pilot in fall 2020; 3) develop a scoring rubric for program assessment. The second large piece of our work was to align our FYW SLOs with the SLOs for our department. While we can easily map the FYW SLOs onto the WRDS SLOs, we will collaborate with the department's Curriculum Committee this fall as we conduct the pilot.

We learned the importance of how we name an assignment and how we can help students visualize it. To this end, we wanted to emphasize the spirit of a portfolio even though it is in the form of a reflective letter and decided to call it The Portfolio (in the form of a Reflective Letter) instead of our initial idea of "The Final Reflective Letter." We also included a clear image of how the reflective letter is the "door" into the various artifacts that comprise the portfolio.

We learned a lot about writing student-friendly SLOs and aligning them with our assignment. We also decided to change our rubric scale (1-3) instead of (1-4), a rather significant change that we might not have moved forward on without OAA support. In particular, we worked with our OAA representative to use measurable outcomes and clear verbs for our SLOs. We also consulted with OAA about creating faculty buy-in for a common artifact, an issue which has been difficult to address in recent years.

We also learned that this work needs to be phase one of aligning FYW assessment with our new minor and soon-to-be major in Writing, Rhetoric and Digital Studies (WRDS). We will be collaborating with the WRDS Curriculum Committee in fall 2020 to develop a shared assignment for WRDS classes that maps onto the one for FYW.

We will certainly know a lot more once we conduct our end-of-semester program assessment using this common assignment and scoring rubric.

How our work will be incorporated
Ten WRDS faculty who are teaching first-year writing in the fall of 2020 will pilot the new portfolio assignment that's in the form of a reflective letter. This is 23 sections of UWRT 1103 and 1104, ~506 students. These faculty will use the revised SLOs as guidelines for measuring student learning. These same faculty will participate in a scoring session of a sample of portfolios at the end of the semester. We will have a norming session for inter-rater reliability beforehand. In addition, we will have faculty focus groups and student surveys to assess the perceived effectiveness of this shared final portfolio assignment.

Once we have the necessary data, we will then work with the faculty participating in the pilot to review the SLOs and the assignment to see what revisions we need to make before submitting this work to the FYW and Curriculum Committees for review and approval.

Anticipated Student Impact: Our FYW longitudinal study revealed that students did not see reflection as useful as other SLOs. We expect that this reflective letter assignment will help develop curricular and pedagogical initiatives that are aligned with departmental goals and will help prepare students to effectively reflect on portfolios. We plan to create long-term benchmarks for reflection, identify reflective traits to target in the next three assessment cycles (AY 2021, 2023, 2025), and implement curricular and pedagogical changes to improve our teaching and assessing of reflection.We anticipate that our revised SLOs will be more student-friendly, allowing novice writers to understand and write about the SLOs more effectively in their reflection letter. We expect this better understanding of SLOs will also aid transfer. We also anticipate that students will receive more focused and common assignment guidelines for the assessment artifact, resulting in more clarity about the assessment artifact.

What we plan to do differently because of our project
Short-term, we will pilot this new portfolio assignment and revised SLOs. Long-term, if the pilot goes well, we will submit our work to the two department committees who need to review them and approve them before having ALL FYW faculty use this more standardized assignment.

In addition, since UWRT 1103 and 1104 are now the entry point for our major, aligning FYW learning outcomes with WRDS SLOs provides long-term data measuring student success in our department. WRDS learning outcomes represent core values in Writing Studies; our majors and minors will:
- Examine literacy as a social practice influenced by cultures
- Conduct research, analysis and assessment of a variety of texts

- Create texts appropriate for contexts and audiences using both print and digital technologies

We seek to align WRDS SLOs with FYW curriculum and pedagogy in a way that maintains FYW best practices, allows for FYW portfolio assessment, and measures general education goals. A common reflective essay used for WRDS and FYW assessment not only provides a standard measurement for student achievement in our department, it also serves as a useful intervention to recent challenges with FYW portfolio assessment.