General Education Competency Assessment Report for Blue Ridge Community College 2022-2023: Civic Engagement and Written Communication

This assessment report is to fulfill the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia's Policy on Student Learning Assessment and Quality in Undergraduate Education.

General Education Philosophy at BRCC

Blue Ridge Community College's general education offerings intentionally strive to develop a liberal arts perspective. The program exposes students to a broad body of knowledge of the major social, cultural, historical, and scientific forces that have shaped human identity and the world. General education enables students to integrate knowledge to address fundamental questions about the nature of the world and its inhabitants. Blue Ridge Community College believes general education is an important component for all students whether they are going immediately into the workforce or continuing their education.

As a part of the VCCS, Blue Ridge Community College adheres to the VCCS General Education Policy in selecting and defining general education competencies. The General Education Policy states that "upon completion of the associate degree, graduates of Virginia's Community Colleges will demonstrate competency in student learning outcomes (SLOs) determined and assessed by each college in 1) civic engagement, 2) critical thinking, 3) professional readiness, 4) quantitative literacy, 5) scientific literacy, and 6) written communication." (p. 1). The competencies are defined as follows:

Civic Engagement is the ability to contribute to the civic life and well-being of local, national, and global communities as both a social responsibility and a life-long learning process. Degree graduates will demonstrate the knowledge and civic values necessary to become informed and contributing participants in a democratic society.

Critical Thinking is the ability to use information, ideas, and arguments from relevant perspectives to make sense of complex issues and solve problems. Degree graduates will locate, evaluate, interpret, and combine information to reach well-reasoned conclusions or solutions.

Professional Readiness is the ability to work well with others and display situationally and culturally appropriate demeanor and behavior. Degree graduates will demonstrate skills important for successful transition into the workplace and pursuit of further education.

Quantitative Literacy is the ability to perform accurate calculations, interpret quantitative information, apply and analyze relevant numerical data, and use results to support conclusions. Degree graduates will calculate, interpret, and use numerical and quantitative information in a variety of settings.

Scientific Literacy is the ability to apply the scientific method and related concepts and principles to make informed decisions and engage with issues related to the natural, physical, and social world. Degree graduates will recognize and know how to use the scientific method, and to evaluate empirical information.

Written Communication is the ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience. Degree graduates will express themselves effectively in a variety of written forms.

Furthermore, BRCC complies with the VCCS General Education Policy by assessing each of the six competency areas outlined above in accordance with SACSCOC accreditation standards and SCHEV policy.

General Education Assessment

The approach to assessment at BRCC is based on the idea that no single instrument or process captures the breadth and depth of general education, and that a robust assessment plan contains multiple strategies. We use direct course-embedded measures of student work through processes within our career/technical and transfer program coursework. We also administer standardized direct assessments of general education to graduating students and/or use indirect measures such as surveys and participation, depending on the competency. Our assessment process considers four components:

General education outcomes in major content coursework

All associate degree programs have a general education core defined by distribution requirements. The general education coursework core of the Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degrees is small in proportion to the major coursework. AAS programs such as Nursing, Veterinary Technology, Business, and Aviation are roughly proportioned at 15 credits general education to 45 credits major coursework. While the introductory level courses in composition, math/science, humanities, and social science provide the fundamentals, the important information for program improvement is to know how students perform in key general education outcomes within the context of their major coursework. Are nursing students writing well in their nursing coursework, following the conventions of their discipline? How does critical thinking factor into the decision-making process in business? Questions like these are addressed by this piece of the package.

For our career/technical (AAS) programs, we ask each year that as part of the program's overall general education assessment strategy, they perform a course-embedded assessment of a designated competency for that year. **For this report, all AAS program heads were asked to identify a program course for 2022-23 in which they would assess the Civic Engagement competency using student work in that course**.

General education outcomes in general education coursework

The Associate of Arts and Sciences (AA&S) and Associate of Science (AS) awards are transfer oriented and have a general education core of 30 or more credits. Students in these programs may be in any of several hundred courses fulfilling either general education or transfer elective requirements, and the courses themselves will have a mix of AA&S, AS, and AAS students enrolled. A system centered on coursework in the major didn't make sense here, so we instead used the distribution requirements as general education "clusters" with associated outcomes – an idea we picked up from our neighbors at JMU.

The cluster areas for assessment purposes are (1) English composition and literature, (2) fine arts and humanities, (3) mathematics, (4) science, and (5) history and social sciences.

Each cluster area is assigned a faculty leader who is responsible for coordinating the assessment of general education competencies in courses in their cluster. Each cluster lead works with faculty teaching designated courses each year to determine an appropriate artifact for assessment that demonstrates at least some of the outcomes associated with that cluster.

Cluster leads and the faculty General Education Assessment Coordinator form the assessment team and score artifacts across all clusters. AAC&U style rubrics for each outcome have been developed and are written broadly enough to be applicable to various works. As part of the scoring process, the group notes strengths and weaknesses and possibilities for improving student performance. The cluster leads share the initial assessment reports with the course faculty and ask them to pick one thing to work on for the following year and produce an action plan. Action plans have included revising existing assignments, creating new assignments to better align with outcomes, and creating new course activities to better support assignments.

In the following year, the courses go through a second round of assessment to see if changes in student performance have occurred after the action plan has been implemented. A comparable selection of student work is taken for scoring, and at the end of the process, the course faculty receive a detailed report of the whole two-year process from start to finish.

There is no set schedule for assessing each competency at the general education course level. We assess multiple competencies each year in various general education courses. This doesn't mesh well with the common scheme of designating a competency every year to *assess*, but we've worked around that: each year, we have a designated competency to *report on*, and we'll usually report on the past several years of cluster-related activities surrounding that competency. **This year, we will report on Civic Engagement activities taking place within the General Education clusters from 2019-20 through 2022-23.**

Institutional level assessment with external benchmarks

Course-embedded assessment in our general education and major content courses is a way of gathering information that is meaningful and actionable for faculty. We added these processes to our assessment package to address a weakness that is inherent in standardized graduation assessments of general education: well-designed summative assessments of general education are written in a way that performance should not be dependent on a particular course. This makes sense as a broad measure of what students can demonstrate by the end of a program, but it's not particularly helpful when you are asking faculty to make use of assessment data to inform strategies for improvement. These instruments don't provide information at that level.

They do have a use however, which is why we opted to supplement them with other measures instead of replacing them when the VCCS schedule of assessments was discontinued. Course-embedded assessment does not provide external benchmarks – faculty end up comparing student performance to benchmarks they set themselves, and it's not surprising that those benchmarks are frequently "met." Standardized assessments give us benchmarks outside ourselves to compare and the results of these graduation assessments can alert us if something is seriously off at the program level. **Each year, graduating students are required to complete an assessment; for 2022-23, the competency was Written Communication, and the instrument was the *Writing Response Test* from McCann Associates**.

Special projects

Finally, in some years we may have a special project in a competency. These will vary from year to year – for example, in the year we looked at Civic Engagement, we included a report on our Blue Ridge Pass program, which engages students in campus and community activities. Last year (22-23) we completed an initial assessment of oral communication in CST 110 as part of Professional Readiness. **Although Professional Readiness isn't our "themed competency" this year, we want to share some updates on this one, as the Communication department proposed and implemented several actions for follow-up**.

Assessment schedule

BRCC will assess the general education competencies on a three-year cycle, reporting on two competencies per year. One of those will be the institutional-level graduation assessment, and for each of these, we have designated the instrument. The other competency will be assessed using the course-embedded approaches described above. Career/technical programs will contribute to the assessment of the themed competency for that year, and summary reports will be provided for the recent activity of the general education clusters in that area.

Instruments:

- Written Communication: *IntelliMetric Written Communication Assessment – Writing Response Test*, McCann
- Civic Engagement: *Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory* (PSRI), Iowa State University
- Quantitative and Scientific Literacy: *Quantitative Reasoning Test* (QR) and *Scientific Reasoning Test* (SR), Madison Assessment
- Critical Thinking: *Test of Everyday Reasoning* (TER), Insight Assessment
- Professional Readiness: Global Perspectives Inventory (GPI), Iowa State University

		Cycle 1			**Cycle 2**	
Competency	**2019-2020**	**2020-2021**	**2021-2022**	**2022-2023**	**2023-2024**	**2024-2025**
Written Communication	Embedded			Graduates (McCann)		
Civic Engagement	Graduates (PSRI)			Embedded		
Quantitative Literacy		Embedded			Graduates (QR)	
Scientific Literacy		Graduates (SR)			Embedded	
Professional Readiness			Embedded			Graduates (GPI)
Critical Thinking			Graduates (TER)			Embedded

Competency: Civic Engagement

Civic Engagement is the ability to contribute to the civic life and well-being of local, national, and global communities as both a social responsibility and a life-long learning process. Degree graduates will demonstrate the knowledge and civic values necessary to become informed and contributing participants in a democratic society.

- **CE1:** Connect knowledge, facts, theories, etc. from course content to one's own experience with civic life, politics, and government
- **CE2:** Identify how social movements and collective actions have created legislative action or social change
- **CE3:** Consider their own attitudes and beliefs in relation to the diversity of communities and cultures
- **CE4:** Construct and explore meaningful questions about diverse human experiences

The assessment rubrics for each outcome are included in Appendix A. Outcomes and rubrics were chosen, developed, and approved by faculty across all disciplines as part of a year-long process, and continue to be revised and updated. Multiple sources were considered and adapted, including the existing set of VCCS Communication outcomes prior to the revision. Rubric statements are modeled after the AAC&U Civic Engagement VALUE Rubric and borrow heavily from that source but have been significantly modified to better align with our assessment structure.

Civic Engagement within general education coursework

For this piece, we aggregate results over the multi-year period leading up to the report. This gives a larger institutional view of the average across of many courses in many disciplines taught at various levels. To obtain a high level of faculty participation and to generate honest and open discussion with faculty about their assignment and course strategies, we have promised a level of anonymity in public-facing reporting. While course faculty are provided with precise scores and detailed feedback, we will not separate scores for individual courses. The following is a combined score report for all courses that chose at least one Civic Engagement outcome for assessment on student work products over the reporting period.

__7 courses__ chose at least one Civic Engagement outcome to assess: CST 151, ENG 241, ENG 242, ENG 243, ENG 251, HIS 101, and PHI 225.

Over the four-year period, __230 student works__ were scored for this competency.

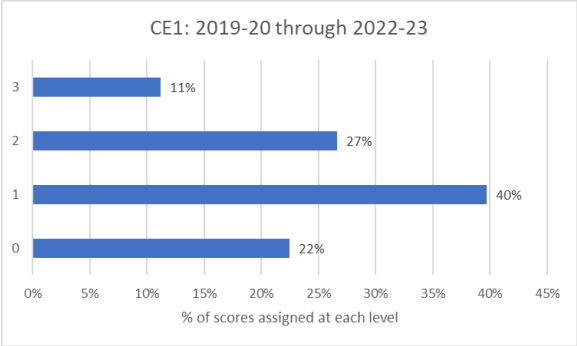
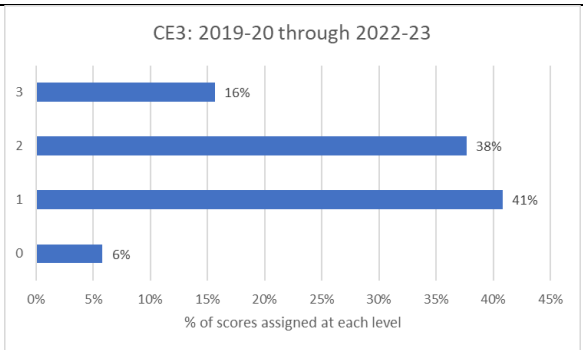
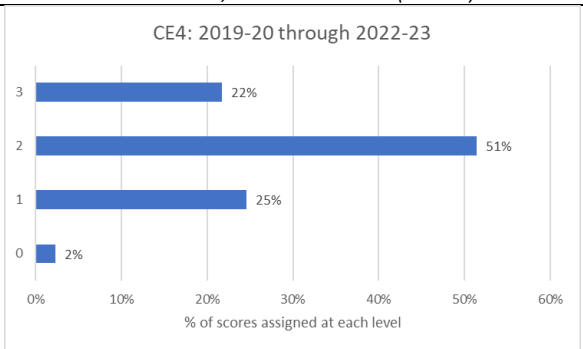
Civic Engagement replaced Cultural and Social Understanding in 2019-20. We began developing and test-driving outcomes in that year. The four outcomes shown have been in their current form since 2021-22 and are still undergoing some revisions

When the new competencies were adopted at the VCCS level there was concern that "Cultural and Social Understanding" was being dropped. Literature, Humanities, and Fine Arts faculty felt strongly about this, as their distribution requirement has been the home of cultural competency. Students in the arts and humanities are introduced to a diversity of cultures and viewpoints, challenging them to expand their world views. That role needed to be recognized, and at the VCCS level, it was clarified that Civic Engagement could include this as experience of diverse cultures as expressed through works of art and literature contribute to the making of informed citizens.

Since there were no established outcomes under Civic Engagement, leads worked with discipline faculty to develop outcomes in this area. **We highlight the work of the English faculty, and a project to revise the ENG 2XX literature courses** as part of Transfer VA. The VCCS course teams incorporated common outcomes into the courses including "construct and explore meaningful questions about diverse human experiences," which the BRCC assessment team proposed to measure under Civic Engagement.

In FA20, ENG 2XX faculty created a rubric and associated an assignment in the "old" ENG 2XX courses to see how well it fit with the current course content. The initial assessment led to the revising of the rubric and some fine tuning in FA21, but also **an ongoing faculty discussion of needing to re-center the content in the ENG courses to clarify how they wish to incorporate cultural competency in the new versions**. Faculty noted the students' tendency to articulate differences between texts or stories, but not connect to the setting in which work was created. Faculty continued this assessment project into FA22 with a new round of follow-up within the new courses to target this area and make sure instruction was aligning with the outcome. More students explicitly made those connections, although the increase was modest: The percentage of students with an average score of 1.5 or better increased from 60% (FA21) to 66% (FA22). Faculty will continue to emphasize those connections throughout the Literature courses. This assessment activity has been effective in highlighting what that needs to look like in structuring the classes.

Aggregated results for Civic Engagement within General Education coursework

 *n=312 scores, mean score M=1.3 (SD =1.0)*	**CE1** (*Connect knowledge, facts, theories, etc. from course content to one's own experience with civic life, politics, and government*) is owned by History and Political Sciences courses and asks students to explicitly make the connections between what they are learning vs. what they currently experience and believe they know about civic life. One thing we discovered is that student understanding of the systems they live under (what we assume they already "know") isn't that accurate, and that limits their ability to make those connections.
CE2: 2019-20 through 2022-23 (no data for this cycle)	Although **CE2** (*Identify how social movements and collective actions have created legislative action or social change*) was identified initially as an outcome of interest, it has not been associated with any assignments yet within the cluster courses.
 *n=223 scores, mean score M=1.6 (SD =0.8)*	**CE3 (***Consider their own attitudes and beliefs in relation to the diversity of communities and cultures*) and **CE4** below were brought on to ensure the contributions of the Humanities, Fine Arts, and Literature to cultural and social understanding were not overlooked when the VCCS outcomes were revised.
 *n=391 scores, mean score M=2.0 (SD =0.8)*	**CE3** and **CE4** (*Construct and explore meaningful questions about diverse human experiences*) have undergone a lengthy development process of testing and revising to make sure that they capture elements that teaching faculty consider to be the essential contributions of their disciplines.

Civic Engagement within Career/Technical (CTE) programs

For the course embedded assessment of Civic Engagement within the CTE programs, we asked faculty to identify a course and assignment to assess *at least one* of CE1, CE2, CE3, or CE4, and to assess that student work using the lens of Civic Engagement rubrics (see Appendix A). Contributions included:

- Emergency Medical Services: Students will participate in EMS on the Hill event. This demonstrates how their experience in the field can directly impact legislation. Because of the costs associated, participation is voluntary. However, the debrief of their experience will be explored by all. [CE1: Connect knowledge, facts, theories, etc. from course content to one's own experience with civic life, politics, and government.]
- Accounting: Students will complete a research paper on the Financial Accounting Standards Board (FASB) with the goal of understanding how current issues in business and American society affect the rules and regulations followed by the accounting profession. Students will learn how a new accounting need moves through the regulatory process and becomes Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) used in all U.S. businesses. [CE1]
- Criminal Justice: Students will complete a research paper on the two basic methods used to select judges in the United States. In doing so, students will comprehend the Missouri Plan and possess the ability to describe how this plan affects judicial selections. Students will discuss certain controversies about the Senate's role in the confirmation process. [CE2: Identify how social movements and collective actions have created legislative action or social change.]
- Business Management: Students will research and present their findings on a court case argued in the Supreme Court which has impacted the U.S. business environment and create legislative action or social change. [CE2]
- Veterinary Technology: Students will complete up to 4 webinars created by the AVMA addressing the following topics: (1) Combating Racism in Veterinary Medicine, (2) Diversity, Marginalization, Intersectionality, (3) Unconscious Bias, and (4) Making a Change from Comfort Zone to Brave Space. [CE3: Consider their own attitudes and beliefs in relation to the diversity of communities and cultures]
- Nursing: Students will develop an understanding of a variety of culturally diverse backgrounds by researching assigned cultures and completing a self-reflective assessment to gain understanding of their own attitudes and beliefs in relation to the diversity of other communities and cultures. Students will then present their information to their peers via a PowerPoint presentation. [CE3]
- No CTE programs chose CE4.

Program faculty are very satisfied with student performance

Table 1: Civic Engagement score summary

CE summary scores (all components)		
Score	**Number**	**%**
4	33	24%
3	35	25%
2	12	9%
1	58	42%
0	0	0

A score of "2" indicates uneven performance but an overall impression of competence. A score of "3" indicates satisfactory or better performance on every component of the underlying scoring tool in use by the instructor.

Due to the varied nature of the programs, the level of the course chosen, and the complexity of the assignment within the course, there is no value in using the data to compare programs to each other. The intent is that, looking at many students across many programs, we get a picture not only of student competency, but also the extent to which program faculty view their students as sufficiently prepared to function in a professional setting. Very few student works scored as completely lacking in proficiency. Many of the courses the student work is pulled from come at the end of the program plan, weaker students have not made it to this point, and students in these classes should be high-performing. Many instructors indicated that in terms of class expectations, a score of 2 would not be considered satisfactory, and they would expect their students to be proficient (3) to exemplary (4) at the task.

Discussion of results

We are getting a much better discussion of results with the use of the Google form we implemented last year. In addition to entering score date, instructors are prompted to address the following:

- Think back about when you were grading your students' work. Did you notice any themes?
- Name one thing you saw that they were particularly good at across the board.
- Can you name one thing that they seemed to have trouble with?
- Was there anything that jumped out that even the good students seemed a little weak on?
- For the weaker students, what sorts of things tripped them up that you gave a lower score?
- Did anything surprise you?
- Name one thing you could do to support your weaker students and help them address the performance issues you noted above.

Here are some of those observations:

Name one thing you saw that they were particularly good at across the board.

- Students engaged in significant research prior to the event.
- The students understood that without the plan, legislatures appointed judges, which contributed to corporate influences via campaign donations.
- Students were able to apply case content to the real world. The understood "the big picture" and how laws provide guidance and benchmarks by which business operate under.
- Their research on the FASB was very well done. They were able to access the governmental website and find credible information about the organization and their role in the society and business.

Can you name one thing that they seemed to have trouble with?

- Students that have not had work experience seem to tie accessibility with school and less about developing important work skills.
- Researching credible legal sources can be a challenge.
- Finding recent information regarding the different cultures. Most information was older than 5 years.
- Adequately presenting what they had accomplished.
- Small grammar issues cost students as well as not properly citing their sources.

Name one thing you could do to support your weaker students and help them address the performance issues you noted above.

- Incorporate more difficult presentations earlier in the curriculum.
- Meet with them more times during the semester to provide better guidance.
- Implementing an "agreement form" that outlines the importance of each participants responsibilities and contributions to the assignment.
- I set up a legal research workshop with the library for one section - this really helped grades. This practice will be presented to all BUS241 faculty (mostly all adjunct faculty) as a best practice to help students not only locate credible sources of research but also on building their critical thinking skills.

Special Project: Following up on CST 110 (Professional Readiness)

Last year, we reported on Professional Readiness as one of the designated competencies and described a project CST 110 (Introduction to Human Communication) faculty were working on to strengthen the Oral Communication component of Professional Readiness. After an initial assessment using the NCA Communication Rubric, the CST faculty The CST faculty drafted a five-step process for Spring 2023 to work on improving vocal variety:

1) Each CST110 faculty member will make improving the vocal variety in pitch, rate, and volume to heighten and maintain interest in an audience a primary goal of teaching, learning objectives, and student improvement.
2) This goal will be communicated to the students in the first class of the semester and reminded before every speech delivery presentation both in class and in announcements on Canvas.
3) Faculty will use 3 specific teaching/learning strategies through the semester to seek to improve vocal variety. These strategies will be reported on in an end of semester meeting.
4) Faculty will count vocal variety as a double portion of the grade for each speech delivery to communicate the importance of it in the speech for the student.
5) At the end of the semester, faculty will use a rubric that they are developing to report on each student's improvement in vocal variety.

The follow-up is to report that CST faculty did in fact work on this project! The faculty reported out at the end of the Soring 2023 semester using a form they had created:

Table 2: CST 110 report form

Category of Reporting Success in Improving Students' Vocal Variety Ability in CST 110 course	Comments
1) I communicated to my students the desire to emphasize Vocal Variety Improvement.	
2) I implemented formative strategies to try to allow the students to practice vocal variety improvement. Describe briefly.	
3) I assessed my students' overall improvement in vocal variety with a final assessment. Describe briefly.	
4) I would give the general improvement of the students' vocal variety what percentage of success in improving?	

The department focused on the qualitative aspects more than the quantitative – faculty were left to their own judgment as to how to measure "success in improving." Responses there ranged from reporting gains on a rubric the faculty had created to "I am certain that 100% of my students improved!" so there is no numerical comparison to made with the initial assessment. This again is fine – we are trying to emphasis the value of work being done with the students over some arbitrary rating scale, and CST faculty embraced this enthusiastically. Here are some of the responses to item (2):

- I encouraged my students daily to participate in group conversations and become more engaged using vocal variety, through impromptu speaking. I also had the students critiquing their teachers, including me, TED talks, weekly sermons, or any formal speaking engagement. The critiques were submitted online and graded each week.
- I had group speeches during the semester to ease some of the pressure of speaking individually and asked students to make sure to increase their volume and make sure they had strong vocal projection.
- After re-discussing vocal variety, we read aloud from children's books with feeling (twice around room, with me modeling first). I was underwhelmed by their vocal variety – next time we'll read standing up and maybe read dialogue. […] Second time we read children's books, we read standing up and vocal variety improved, but some students seemed unwilling to fully engage with activity (as an aside, my children's book selection could use more diversity…).
- For the third speech games activity, we read from prepared sheets using randomly selected emotions. Some students engaged with it more than others, but three (out of eight) really engaged with their emotion and two more definitely made an effort than previously.
- I created a mini-module in my online class to address vocal variety. It included instructions for the module, a video, and an article about vocal variety. Students completed a pre-assessment before their Informative Speech and a post-assessment after their Persuasive Speech

Competency: Written Communication

Written Communication is the ability to develop, convey, and exchange ideas in writing, as appropriate to a given context and audience. Degree graduates will express themselves effectively in a variety of written forms.

Instrument: Writing Response (McCann Associates)

This graduation assessment is a customized version of the essay portion of the Virginia Placement Test (VPT). This assessment is a computer adaptive test that measures a student's written communication proficiency across five domains: focus and meaning; content and development; organization; language use and style; and mechanics and conventions. This test also provides a holistic score.

The five domains are further described below:

> **Focus and Meaning**: The extent to which the response establishes and maintains a controlling or central idea and an understanding of purpose and audience while completing all parts of the task.
>
> **Content and Development**: The extent to which the response develops ideas fully using extensive, specific, and relevant details (facts, examples, anecdotes, opinions, statistics, reasons, and/or explanations).
>
> **Organization**: The extent to which the response demonstrates a cohesive and unified structure, direction, paragraphing, and transitional devices.
>
> **Language Use and Style**: The extent to which the response demonstrates an awareness of audience and purpose, and creates tone and voice through the effective use of sentence structure, sentence variety, and word choice.
>
> **Mechanics and Conventions**: The extent to which the response demonstrates control of conventions, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling.
>
> (McCann Associates. (2016) *Student Score Report: Domain descriptions*.)

The assessment uses a 1-6 scale where four is considered college ready, five is a beginning college writer, and six is a college writer.

Below is the scale score for each domain and score association.

Table 3: Rubric for each domain and score association.

Domain	1	2	3	4	5	6
Focus and meaning	This response demonstrates inadequate focus and unity of ideas.	This response demonstrates inadequate focus and unity of ideas.	This response demonstrates minimal focus and unity of ideas.	This response demonstrates limited focus and unity of ideas.	This response demonstrates adequate focus and consistency in purpose.	This response demonstrates good focus and consistency in purpose.

Content and development	This response demonstrates inadequate development and supporting detail.	This response demonstrates inadequate development and supporting detail.	This response demonstrates minimal development and supporting detail.	This response demonstrates limited development and supporting detail.	This response demonstrates adequate development and supporting detail.	This response demonstrates good development and supporting detail.
Organization	This response demonstrates inadequate organization of ideas.	This response demonstrates inadequate organization of ideas.	This response demonstrates minimal organization of ideas.	This response demonstrates limited organization of ideas.	This response demonstrates adequate organization of ideas.	This response demonstrates good organization of ideas.
Language use and style	This response demonstrates inadequate language and word choice.	This response demonstrates inadequate language and word choice.	This response demonstrates minimal language and word choice.	This response demonstrates limited language and word choice.	This response demonstrates adequate language and word choice.	This response demonstrates good language and word choice.
Mechanics and conventions	This response demonstrates inadequate control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	This response demonstrates inadequate control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	This response demonstrates minimal control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	This response demonstrates limited control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	This response demonstrates adequate control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.	This response demonstrates good control of mechanical conventions such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

Note: Adapted from McCann Associates, 2016, Student score report: Writing score feedback.

The instrument aligns primarily with two of the outcomes course faculty have developed for use in the course-embedded part of our general education assessment process.

Table 4: Critical Thinking outcomes map

Current (2022-2023) BRCC Written Communication Outcomes	Writing Response Domains
WC4: Assimilate and organize content in order to develop and present an idea	Focus and Meaning: The extent to which the response establishes and maintains a controlling or central idea and an understanding of purpose and audience while completing all parts of the task.
WC4: Assimilate and organize content in order to develop and present an idea	Content and Development: The extent to which the response develops ideas fully using extensive, specific, and relevant details (facts, examples, anecdotes, opinions, statistics, reasons, and/or explanations).
WC4: Assimilate and organize content in order to develop and present an idea	Organization: The extent to which the response demonstrates a cohesive and unified structure, direction, paragraphing, and transitional devices.
WC2: Produce substantially error-free prose in response to writing assignments	Language Use and Style: The extent to which the response demonstrates an awareness of audience and purpose and creates tone and voice through the effective use of sentence structure, sentence variety, and word choice.
WC2: Produce substantially error-free prose in response to writing assignments	Mechanics and Conventions: The extent to which the response demonstrates control of conventions, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling.

Methodology and limitations

The Writing Response assessment was administered to students graduating with an associate degree during the 2022-2023 academic year. BRCC graduates have been assessed at the time of graduation for over 15 years and participation is required of all associate degree graduates. The majority of students took McCann Associates' Writing Response assessment from a location of their own choosing, but some completed it in the proctored Testing Center on campus or at the Waynesboro Outpost.

The assessment was made available to students through the Canvas Learning Management System. Students had approximately four weeks to complete the assessment, with some variation depending on when students applied for graduation.

The limitations of the assessment were that there were not consistent testing conditions in which students completed the assessment. Additionally, the assessment might be considered low stakes because there was no impact on students' grades or GPA, although some students expressed concern regarding the fact that not completing the assessment would affect their graduation status. Student graduation is not impacted, but we do place a hold on transcripts. Of additional concern is the number of test takers when examining results by program. There were 10 programs which had an n of less than 10.

Our goal was both to gather new baseline data for this version of the Written Communication assessment as well as meet or exceed the scores from the previous version. When comparing to past data, it is important to note that scoring was simplified between the previous administration in 2015-16 and the administration in 22-23, removing the possibility of scores that are not whole numbers between 1-6. The rubric itself remains the same.

The writing prompt used for the 2022-23 implementation was "Our Changing Society":

> While society is currently undergoing many rapid changes, people disagree about their direction. Has the world, in fact, changed for the better or worse?

Test-taker demographics

In 2022-23, after removing submissions that were unscored due to being blank, too short, or off topic, there were 256 results. When matched with graduates, 13 students who had not actually graduated were removed, yielding 243 complete assessment records. Detailed demographic information appears in *Appendix C: Written Communication Data Details.* Some general trends:

- Of the 394 AAS, AS, and AA&S degree graduates of 2022-23, 243 (62%) completed a graduation assessment. Participation rates for the assessment were slightly better than last year (55%).
- The program breakdown is roughly 60% transfer (AA&S, AS) to 40% career/technical (AAS). Within the AAS programs, only Vet Tech, Nursing, and Business Management had more than 10 graduates participating. These programs each get a detailed mini-report on their program graduates. The rest of the AAS programs have only handfuls of test-takers and do not receive any program-level information.
- We began disaggregating on other indicators such as race/ethnicity last year and noted some challenges with demographics that remain in place. The students represented in this assessment are again majority White (73%), with the next largest group reporting as Hispanic/Latinx (12%). The other ethnicities are represented by less than 10 students each. Pell eligibility status and

traditional vs. non-traditional age are more promising in terms of having a reasonable number of students in each component of their breakdowns.

Results

For data details and tables, refer to *Appendix C.* Here, we summarize and discuss anything that stood out.

Established benchmarks and overall performance

For comparison and analysis, we have the results from the large-scale administration of the instrument that took place at the VCCS level in 2015-2016. 1627 student works were scored system wide, with an average holistic score of 4.7 (SD = 1.1). Average subscores at the VCCS ranged from a low of 4.1 (organization) to 4.7 (language and style). At the time, BRCC scores tracked closely with the VCCS as a whole, with holistic and subscore means all coming in at one tenth of a point higher. **Current BRCC performance has significantly improved over 2015-16 performance and now exceeds established VCCS performance data.**

Change over time

BRCC last administered the *McCann Writing Assessment* as a graduation assessment in 2015-2016. Table 9 and Table 10 in Appendix C provide comparison data for change over time. Highlights include

- The mean score for all BRCC graduates for the 2022-2023 assessment was 5.11 (n = 243, SD = 0.97). The previous administration in 2015-2016 had a mean score of 4.84 (n = 314, SD = 1.06). This increase is statistically significant (p = 0.0021).
- 79.0% scored overall as a beginning college writer (5) or college writer (6). The previous administration in 2015-2016 had 68.2% earning a 5 or 6 holistic score.
- After the 2015-16 implementation of this assessment, AS Science faculty moved to add CST 110 into the AS degree. CST 110 covers both oral and written forms of communication, which was viewed as a major weakness of science students. This group experienced the largest gain in mean score, and the percentage of students earning a 5 or 6 holistic score jumped from 74% to 90%.
- Among the AAS programs, Business Administration made notable gains, with 90% of program students scoring 5-6, up from 67% in 2015-2016. Many Business program courses were overhauled during this time period in terms of the faculty teaching the course, support provided to students and how students were assessed, and a deliberate effort was made to require more student work to address the previously low performance.

Variation among programs

Tables 9 and 10 also allow for some comparison between programs; however as noted, a limitation of this type of assessment is that most of our programs have only a handful of graduates, and we only report out on programs with more than 10 graduates.

- As always, transfer programs tend to score higher than career technical programs; the overall mean score for all AAS programs combined is 4.9 (compare to 5.2 for AA&S College Transfer).
- Veterinary Technology scores were unusually low (M = 4.6, n = 24) with only 54% of the students scoring at the 5-6 level. This group is generally one of the highest performing on graduation assessments and has in past years been at the top of measured programs in both

Scientific Reasoning and Critical Thinking. Results have been communicated to the program director to help guide possible revisions in assignments.

Variation among demographic groups

Disaggregated data appear in multiple tables in *Appendix C*. We looked at race/ethnicity (Table 11), Pell eligibility status (Table 12), first-generation status (Table 13), and traditional college age vs not (Table 14). We are not equipped to do the sort of formal analysis that would consider interactions between groups, but we can look at each grouping in isolation and see if any broad trends jump out. In short,

- Race/ethnicity and Pell eligibility don't appear to have much of an impact on Written Communication scores.
- There do appear to be small performance differences associated with first generation status and age. Age scores are slightly U-shaped, with 29-35 year olds at the bottom of the U (66% scoring at the 5-6 level). While 80% of non-first-generation students score at the 5-6 level, only 70% of first-generation students do so.

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council (DEIC) continues to identify, develop, and promote training activities in the current year, and will continue to do so going forward. This year, faculty were surveyed as to how they were incorporating DEI strategies into their courses. Responses supporting written communication included discussion of academic vs conversational wording, incorporating a variety of assignment types, and video captioning.

Appendix A: Civic Engagement Rubrics

Rubrics are styled after and adapted from numerous sources, including the AAC&U VALUE Rubrics, under the Creative Commons license CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. Rubrics are significantly modified from the original source and there is no implied endorsement by AAC&U.

CE1: Connect knowledge, facts, theories, etc. from course content to one's own experience with civic life, politics, and government.

4 (Exemplary)	3 (Proficient)	2 (Developing)	1 (Emerging)	0 (Insufficient)
Makes sophisticated connections between course content relevant to civic engagement and one's own experience with civic life, politics, and government. Discusses nuance in various theories and elements of civic life today.	Analyzes knowledge, theories, etc. from course content relevant to civic engagement with regards to one's own experience with civic life, politics, and government.	Makes simple connections between course content relevant to civic engagement and one's own experience with civic life, politics, and government.	Begins to identify course content that is relevant to civic engagement and one's own experience with civic life, politics, and government. May make errors in thinking or inappropriate connections.	Is unable to make connections between course content relevant to civic engagement and one's experience within civic life, politics, or government.

CE2: Identify how social movements and collective actions have created legislative action or social change.

4 (Exemplary)	3 (Proficient)	2 (Developing)	1 (Emerging)	0 (Insufficient)
Makes sophisticated and nuanced connections between social movements or collective actions and legislative action or social change. Develops unique ideas about current social movements, collective actions, etc., based on knowledge of historical events.	Makes meaningful connections between social movements or collective actions and legislative action or social change. Can make more abstract connections between past and current social movements, collective actions, etc.	Makes simple connections between social movements or collective actions and legislative action or social change. Can make basic connections between past and current social movements, collective actions, etc.	Begins to identify connections between social movements or collective actions and legislative action or social change. May make some logical "leaps" in connecting events or connect them inaccurately.	Is unable to make connections between social movements or collective actions and legislative action or social change.

CE3: Consider their own attitudes and beliefs in relation to the diversity of communities and cultures.

4 (Exemplary)	3 (Proficient)	2 (Developing)	1 (Emerging)	0 (Insufficient)
Demonstrates willingness to adjust one's own attitudes and beliefs because of working within and learning from diversity of communities and cultures.	Reflects on how own attitudes and beliefs are different from those of other cultures and communities. Exhibits interest about what can be learned from diversity of communities and cultures.	Begins to identify that own attitudes and beliefs are different from those of other cultures and communities. Expresses some interest in what can be learned from diversity of communities and cultures.	Expresses attitudes and beliefs as an individual, from a one-sided view. Exhibits little curiosity in what can be learned from diversity of communities and cultures.	Is unable to express attitudes and beliefs as an individual, from a one-sided view. Is indifferent or resistant to what can be learned from diversity of communities and cultures.

CE4: Construct and explore meaningful questions about diverse human experiences.

4 (Exemplary)	3 (Proficient)	2 (Developing)	1 (Emerging)	0 (Insufficient)
Independently creates a framework to explore distinctions in cultural values that arise from diverse human experiences and evaluates perceptions within that frame.	Articulates the distinctions in cultural values that arise from diverse human experiences and explores the ramifications within cultures	Articulates the distinctions in cultural values that arise from diverse human experiences.	Recognizes individual differences but does not express understanding of other perspectives.	Fails to identify differences in human perspectives.

Appendix B: Civic Engagement Data Details

Table 5: Career/Technical program contribution by program for Civic Engagement

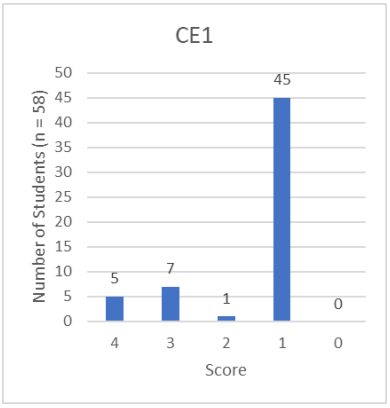
Program	CE1	CE2	CE3	Total	%
Accounting	7	0	0	60	3.2%
Advanced Manufacturing	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Automotive	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Aviation	0	0	0	0	0.0%
Business Management / Accounting	0	53	0	0	24.0%
Computer and Elec Tech	0	0	4	4	1.8%
Criminal Justice	0	10	0	10	4.5%
Emergency Med Serv	5	0	0	5	2.3%
Human Services	44	0	0	44	19.9%
Info Sys Tech	0	0	7	7	3.2%
Engineering Technology	2	0	0	2	0.9%
Nursing	0	0	48	48	21.7%
Vet Tech	0	0	41	41	18.6%
All Programs				221	

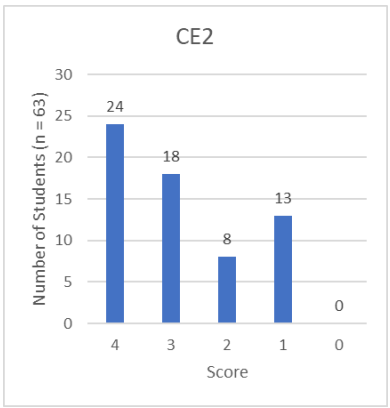
Table 1 shows the numbers of works scored for each outcome, total number of student works contributed, and percentage that each program contributed to the total. Accounting and Business Management chose a course common to both programs this year for CE2.

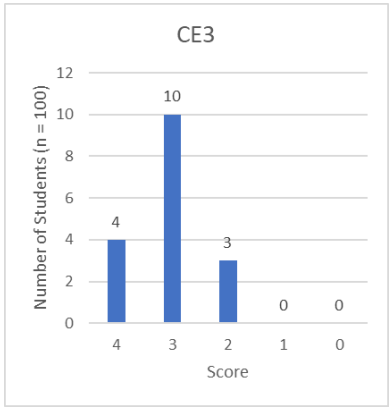
Table 2: Career/Technical program score data for Civic Engagement

	n	Mean	SD	% at 4	% at 3	% at 2	% at 1	% at 0
CE1	58	1.52	1.00	8.6%	12.1%	1.7%	77.6%	0.0%
CE2	63	2.84	1.14	38.1%	28.6%	12.7%	20.6%	0.0%
CE3	100	3.01	0.97	48.0%	5.0%	47.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Table 3: Counts of CTE students at each level for each competency







Appendix C: Written Communication Data Details

Table 4: Test-taker demographics (Age, Gender, Ethnicity, First Gen, Pell) 2022-23

Age Group	Count	Gender	Count	Ethnicity	Count	First Gen	Count	Pell Eligible	Count
17-22	139	Female	156	American Indian	1	No / Unknown	216	No	153
23-28	50	Male	86	Asian, Pacific Islander	6	Yes	27	Yes	90
29-35	29	Unknown / Chose not to provide	1	Black, African American	9	**Total**	**243**	**Total**	**243**
36-45	15	**Total**	**243**	Hispanic, Latino	29				
Over 45	10			White	177				
Total	**243**			Other	3				
				Choose not to provide	18				
				Total	**243**				

Table 6: Test-taker demographics (Age, Gender, Ethnicity, First Gen, Pell) 2015-16

Age Group	Count	Gender	Count	Ethnicity	Count	First Gen	Count	Pell Eligible	Count
17-22	150	Female	196	American Indian	4	No	278	No	173
23-28	88	Male	118	Asian, Pacific Islander	7	Yes	36	Yes	138
29-35	41	*Unknown / Chose not to provide*	*Not an option until 2019*	Black, African American	18	**Total**	**314**	**Total**	**314**
36-45	22	**Total**	**314**	Hispanic, Latino	16				
Over 45	13			White	267				
Total	**314**			Other	0				
				Choose not to provide	2				
				Total	**314**				

Table 7: Number of test-takers by award and program (2022-23)

Award	Program	Frequency	# of Degrees Awarded
AA&S	College/University Transfer	130	199
AS	Science	20	24
AAS	(All AAS combined)	93	171
AAS	Accounting	2	6
AAS	Administration of Justice	2	9
AAS	Advanced Manufacturing Technology	5	9
AAS	Automotive Analysis and Repair	4	5
AAS	Aviation Maintenance Technology	5	7
AAS	Business Management	10	18
AAS	Computer and Electronics Technology	2	4
AAS	Emergency Medical Services	2	8
AAS	Engineering Technology / Mechanical Design	2	3
AAS	Human Services	4	14
AAS	Information Systems Technology	9	14
AAS	Nursing	22	37
AAS	Veterinary Technology	24	37

Table 8: Overall % of students in each Performance Category (2022-23)

	1-3 Not College Ready	4 College Ready	5 Beginning College Writer	6 College Writer
Overall (Holistic)	6.2%	14.8%	37.9%	**41.2%**
Focus and Meaning	6.2%	15.2%	35.0%	**43.6%**
Content and Development	7.0%	28.4%	**52.3%**	12.3%
Organization	10.3%	30.0%	**54.3%**	5.3%
Language Use and Style	8.6%	24.7%	**33.3%**	**33.3%**
Mechanics and Conventions	20.2%	25.1%	**39.5%**	15.2%

Scores below 4 are not considered college ready. Scores of 4 are college ready, with 5 indicating a beginning college writer and 6 a college writer.

Table 9: Comparison of mean scores over time by program

	BRCC: 2022 – 2023			BRCC: 2015 – 2016					
	n	**M1**	**SD1**	***n***	**M2**	**SD2**	**M1-M2**	***p***	***d***
All Graduates	243	5.11	0.97	314	4.84	1.06	0.27	0.0021	0.2657
AA&S: College Transfer	130	5.21	0.90	151	5.11	0.97	0.10	0.3738	0.1069
AS: Science	20	5.40	0.80	23	4.96	0.81	0.44	0.0814	0.5466
AAS: All Majors	93	4.91	1.06	140	4.53	1.11	0.38	0.0098	0.3501
AAS: Business Management	10	5.40	0.66	15	5.13	0.88	0.27	0.4176	0.3471
AAS: Nursing	22	4.77	0.85	60	4.34	1.18	0.43	0.1217	0.4182
AAS: Veterinary Technology	24	4.58	1.15	31	4.68	0.96	-0.10	0.7267	0.0944

Table 10: Comparison of percentage of students scoring 5 or 6 over time

	BRCC: 2022 – 2023		BRCC: 2015 – 2016		
	n	**%1**	***n***	**%2**	**%1-%2**
All Graduates	243	79.0%	314	68.2%	10.8%
AA&S: College Transfer	130	83.8%	151	78.8%	5.0%
AS: Science	20	90.0%	23	73.9%	16.1%
AAS: All Majors	93	69.9%	140	55.7%	14.2%
AAS: Business Management	10	90.0%	15	66.7%	23.3%
AAS: Nursing	22	68.2%	60	51.7%	16.5%
AAS: Veterinary Technology	24	54.2%	31	58.1%	-3.9%

Table 11: Scores disaggregated by race/ethnicity (2022-23)

	Count	**Mean Score**	**SD**	**% scored 5 or 6**
Hispanic, Latino	29	5.1	0.71	86.2%
White	177	5.1	1.01	78.0%
Other (groups with n < 10)	19	4.8	1.06	68.4%
Choose not to provide	18	5.2	0.79	88.9%

Table 12: Scores disaggregated by Pell eligibility (2022-23)

	Count	**Mean Score**	**SD**	**% scored 5 or 6**
Non-Pell eligible	153	5.14	0.92	79.7%
Pell eligible	90	5.07	1.06	77.8%

Table 13: Scores disaggregated by first generation (2022-23)

	Count	Mean Score	SD	% scored 5 or 6
Not First Generation	216	5.14	0.93	80.1%
First Generation	27	4.85	1.21	70.4%

Table 14: Scores disaggregated by age (2022-23)

	Count	Mean Score	SD	% scored 5 or 6
17-22 yrs	139	5.18	0.90	80.6%
23-28 yrs	50	5.06	1.08	78.0%
29-35 yrs	29	4.76	0.90	65.5%
36-45 yrs	15	5.27	1.06	86.7%
Over 45 yrs	10	5.20	1.17	90.0%