Section #1: Contact Information of Person Submitting Application	
Name	Jodene DeKorte
Title	Dean, School of General Education
Institution	Kaplan University
Department/Program	School of General Education and the Open College at KU
Street Address	550 West Van Buren
City, State, Zip	Chicago, IL 60607
Phone	303-485-0651
Email	jdekorte@kaplan.edu
Signature	*Jodene DeKorte*

Section #2: Institutional Endorsement -- Chief Executive Officer or Chief Academic Officer	
Name	David Starnes
Title	Vice President of Academic Affairs, Curriculum and Governance
Institution	Kaplan University
Phone	248-217-1744
Email	dstarnes@kaplan.edu
Signature	*David B. St...*

Section #3: Application Summary

   The Kaplan University Course Level Assessment (CLA) program is a multi-facetted approach to student learning assessment and has evolved over nearly ten years. The three types of outcomes evaluated as part of the program are Course Outcomes (COs), General Education Literacies (GELs) and Professional Competencies (PCs).   The structure of the CLA program is designed to highlight the skill acquisition level of each student in his/her degree discipline, general education, and professionalism. Receiving recognition from *Inside Higher Ed* in the May 2015 article, "Profit and Competency," the Kaplan CLA program's evolution was detailed. Also mentioned in the article was the U.S. Department of Education's approval to participate in direct assessment programs. Receiving recognition from a prestigious publication and the U.S. Department of Education indicates that the Kaplan CLA program, as described below, is both unique and exceptional.

Criterion 1: Identifying the need for new program creation or revision

In 2003, Kaplan College became the newest iteration of what was originally founded in 1937 as the American Institute of Commerce (AIC). AIC was a small business school in Davenport, Iowa. Kaplan college initially offered online bachelor's degrees. By 2004, the school was approved to add master's degrees and was renamed Kaplan University. Today, Kaplan University (KU) has an ongoing enrollment of approximately 40,000 students in online and face-to-face programs.

During this same period as KU was evolving, many higher education authorities began pointing to a shift in expectations for students and in how student performance would be evaluated. Instead of being expected to produce knowledge, it was suggested that students should be taught and evaluated on the ability to use knowledge (Gordon, 2003; Gibbon, 1998). Part of the Kaplan University (KU) Mission is to "... prepare students to meet the ever-changing needs of their communities now and in the future." In line with our mission and in an effort to continually provide students with an outstanding education, faculty members and leadership at KU determined it was necessary to develop a program to assess student performance in a new way. Over the next decade, Kaplan would devise a program encompassing a three-tiered approach to evaluating students: course specific knowledge, general education literacies, and professional competencies. Below and in the subsequent sections, the various parts of the outcomes assessment program as well as the faculty involvement will be explained further.

The new assessment program, initiated in 2007, would begin with determining student attainment of objectives in every course at the university via assignments structured around specific Course Outcomes (COs). Although common practice today, at the time, course level assessment had not yet gained much recognition. By taking the lead in assessing student learning in this new way, Kaplan University provided students with a unique educational experience and a new way to demonstrate learning. Over the next two years, course outcomes would be written into, and evaluated for, every student in every course at the university (approximately 800 courses).

Following the successful launch of the initial portion of the outcomes assessment program with the COs, KU decided to expand the program and tasked The School of General Education with the goal of helping the faculty provide a method for students to build connections from general education concepts to specific degree areas. The School of General Education was selected to house the GELs for two reasons: 1) the literacies are clearly grounded in general education concepts and 2) the general education concepts lay the foundation for all further learning. Thus in February 2008, the General Education Literacies (GELs) became the second portion of the outcomes assessment program.

Unlike COs, the GELs were not course specific but were instead standardized across the entire university. The School of General Education's mission is to "... empower students to cultivate independent, critical, and rational thinking; express ideas coherently; develop new interests and academic skills; engage and communicate in a diverse and changing world; and encourage practical and professional applications." The task of governing the GELs was assigned to the leadership of the School of General Education; however, faculty members from across the institution were responsible for writing the GEL outcomes and rubrics and evaluating assignments to determine whether the GELs could be properly evaluated based on the assignment.

The GELs, since inception, have been an inter-disciplinary, faculty-driven process with each GEL committee including representation from every school at the university. The process for developing the GELs began with a two day, face-to-face curriculum retreat July 31 - August 1, 2008. During the retreat, faculty members assigned to each of the GEL committees wrote the GEL outcomes and the grading rubrics for each of the GEL areas: Arts & Humanities, Communications, Critical Thinking, Ethics, Mathematics, Research/Information, Science, and Social Sciences. Once the GELs were written, the outcomes were vetted across the institution. Next, the university faculty was trained in incorporating and assessing the GELs. The faculty and curriculum managers determined how the curriculum and assignments of every undergraduate class at the university could include GEL area content. GELs were purposefully distributed into all classes to ensure two things: 1 – all undergraduate courses would include a communication GEL as part of the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC)

initiative at the university and 2 – all other GELs would be distributed across all degree programs guaranteeing students graduating from KU had a solid general education foundation, especially when considered in conjunction with the general education core classes.

In 2014, The School of General Education was again tasked with expanding the course level assessment program to include Professional Competencies (PCs), which would further enhance and evaluate student learning. Derived in much the same manner as the GELs during a two-day summit, the PCs were a faculty-driven project with representation from every school at the university. The PCs focus on the areas of Leadership, Multiculturalism & Diversity, Personal Presentation, and Teamwork at the undergraduate level. Unlike the GELs, the PCs were also added to graduate level courses. In the graduate classes, PCs include communication and problem solving/critical thinking in addition to areas previously mentioned. PCs are equally divided among the required courses in order to provide a solid foundation to students, just as with the GELs, in each degree program.

Also taken into consideration for the PCs were the expectations of business and industry stakeholders. Upon adding the final portion of the outcome assessment program, KU proceeded to develop a crosswalk document between the outcome of the assessment program and the *Common Employability Skills* published in 2014 by the National Network of Business and Industry Associations. In short, the crosswalk demonstrates that **all** of the business and industry expectations in the *Common Employability Skills* can be matched to one or more outcomes in the KU outcomes assessment program indicating that KU graduates will possess the knowledge and skills necessary for 21st century careers.

Since program implementation, documents have been created by faculty and curriculum teams to keep students abreast of the assessment program and the benefits. The document at left, *An Introduction to Course Level Assessments*, is the latest iteration of the student facing materials for undergraduates and is included in all undergraduate classes. A similar graduate student version is included in all graduate courses. Students are major stakeholders in the outcomes assessment program and should understand how the assessments are being conducted and why the information concerning student performance in the COs, GELs, and PCs is as important as grades earned in classes.

At Kaplan University, the goal has been to develop a thorough assessment plan that is truly indicative of each student's abilities. As evidenced by the afore-mentioned crosswalk, KU provides students opportunities to gain the knowledge and skills that are demanded by 21st Century employers. The CLA program allows students to demonstrate mastery of educational outcomes and is a quality example of learning assessment. In subsequent sections examples have been provided to further support the claim of quality in the program.

Criterion 2: Identification of Goals and Procedure Used to Address Needs

The Kaplan University faculty has been the driving force in the development of the assessment structure of the outcomes assessment program. From the outset, university leadership understood the importance of having the program be developed by faculty members to achieve faculty commitment to the project. After nearly ten years, the CLA program includes Course Outcomes (COs), General Education Literacies (GELs), and Professional Competencies (PCs). Below, each step in the assessment process is detailed including operational definitions and procedures.

Part 1: Course Outcomes (COs) - the discipline-specific learning outcomes in each course.

COs are written into each course, by Course Leads, Subject Matter Experts, and Subject Matter Researchers. These members of the faculty teach in the department that "houses" the course and in most cases are assigned to teach the specific course. The COs are specific behaviors which allow students to demonstrate discipline specific knowledge or skill acquisition. In addition to the COs, the faculty team also writes grading rubrics used in the evaluation of the objectives for each student. The standardized rubrics add to inter-rater reliability. Due to the incredible variation in course content, an inclusive list of all COs is not possible; however, an example is provided below.

Composition 107 – Course Outcomes:
- Apply reading skills to determine the elements of effective writing.
- Use language appropriate to audience and situation in a personal document.
- Apply strategies to write effective academic documents.
- Demonstrate when, how, and why to support your writing with appropriate research.
- Apply strategies to write effective professional documents.

Apply strategies to write effective professional documents: Assignment Example (excerpt)
Select an article relevant to your field of study from one of the following professional websites. Read the article and apply what you have learned about appropriate language and writing professional documents to write a 1 to 1½-page Executive Summary of the article you have chosen, organized into 3–4 paragraphs. Summarize the main points of this article and explain how the information contained within the article is relevant to a specific issue or problem the company is currently facing. Make a recommendation for what your audience should do with this information.

Part 2: General Education Literacies (GELs) - the learning outcomes related to critical thinking, reasoning, and writing skills across nine areas of literacy.

GELs are not course specific but are instead standardized across the institution. The GELs allow undergraduate students repeated opportunities to connect with the general education disciplines of Arts & Humanities, Communications, Critical Thinking, Ethics, Mathematics, Research/Information, Science, and Social Sciences. The GELs reinforce and extend the students' knowledge through repeated interaction during the students' program of study, far beyond the general education core.

Including GELs in courses outside the School of General Education has fostered connections between faculty members across the institution. For example, business faculty members may teach a course that includes a Social Science GEL. Through this assignment, the business faculty members extend the reach of the Humanities and Social Sciences Department as they reinforce and continue the lessons presented in the Social Science core course(s).

Including the GELs in coursework across the university also helps students build connections. Adding to career readiness, learning to make connections is a valuable skill; employers expect applicants who are not only knowledgeable but who know how to apply that knowledge in current and future situations. Student performance on the GELs is assessed by members of the entire university faculty since the assignments are embedded in every class and evaluated by the instructor who teaches the course. GEL rubrics were written to be general enough to be easily applicable to a wide variety of courses across the university but specific enough to offset introducing inter-rater reliability problems. Below is the list of GELs and an example showing how students in discipline specific courses interact with GELs.

General Education Literacies (GELs):
- **GEL-1 Communications:** Demonstrate college-level communication through a variety of media.
- **GEL-2 Mathematics**: Apply quantitative reasoning to real-world situations
- **GEL-3 Science:** Analyze how scientific principles are applied in real-world contexts.
- **GEL-4 Social Science:** Critically evaluate the social or psychological issues that impact human behavior.
- **GEL-5 Arts and Humanities:** Recognize human potential through a study of human expressions.
- **GEL-6 Research and Information:** Apply methods for finding, evaluating, and using resources.
- **GEL-7 Ethics:** Identify, apply, and evaluate ethical reasoning.
- **GEL-8 Critical Thinking:** Apply critical thinking to real-life situations.
- **GEL-9 Technology:** Use information technology to solve real-world problems and communicate effectively.
- **GEL -10 Professionalism and Career Development:** Apply skills which support career and professional success

GEL-2 Mathematics Example: Criminal Justice 444

Students prepare a training session for teaching people about alcohol abuse and drinking and driving. Presentation must include a spreadsheet that gives facts of six people going out for a night on the town. The presentation includes alcohol equivalence measures for each person based on the person's age, height and weight and amount of alcohol consumed.

Part 3: Professional Competencies (PCs) - the learning outcomes that describe professional behaviors that lead to success in a work environment.

PCs are also not course specific and focus on the areas of Leadership, Multiculturalism & Diversity, Personal Presentation, and Teamwork at the undergraduate level. Unlike the GELs, the PCs were also added to graduate level courses. In the graduate classes, PCs include all the skills listed for undergraduates along with communication and problem solving/critical thinking (both are GELs in the undergraduate curriculum) PCs are equally divided among the courses in each degree program in order to provide a solid foundation to students in each area. Each course prepares students to enter the professional arena by helping to develop behaviors that contribute to a positive, productive, and cohesive work environment.

As with the GELs, student performance on the Professional Competencies (PCs) is assessed by members of the entire university faculty since the assignments are embedded in courses across the institution and evaluated by the instructor who teaches the course. Since PCs also cross curriculum disciplines, the grading rubrics, which are standard for each sub-outcome, must be general enough to apply but precise enough to allow for consistent application, and reduce potential inter-rater reliability issues. Below is a list of the PCs and an assignment example.

Professional Competencies (PCs):
- **PC -1 Teamwork:** Work in teams to achieve collective goals.
- **PC-2 Leadership:** Demonstrate leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities to successfully lead teams within one's profession.
- **PC-3 Personal Presentation:** Demonstrate professionalism in a variety of situations.
- **PC-4 Multiculturalism and Diversity:** Leverage the strengths of multiculturalism and diversity for the benefit of the organization and community.
- **PC-5 Graduate Communications:** Demonstrate professional written and verbal communication to achieve positive results.
- **PC-6 Graduate Problem Solving and Critical Thinking:** Apply critical thinking and problem solving behaviors.
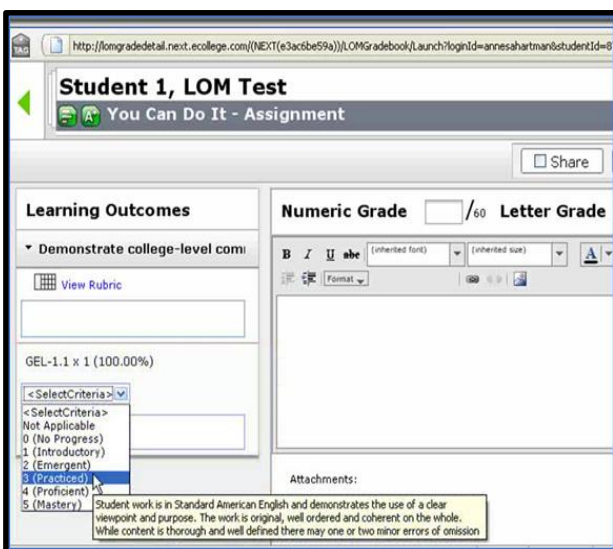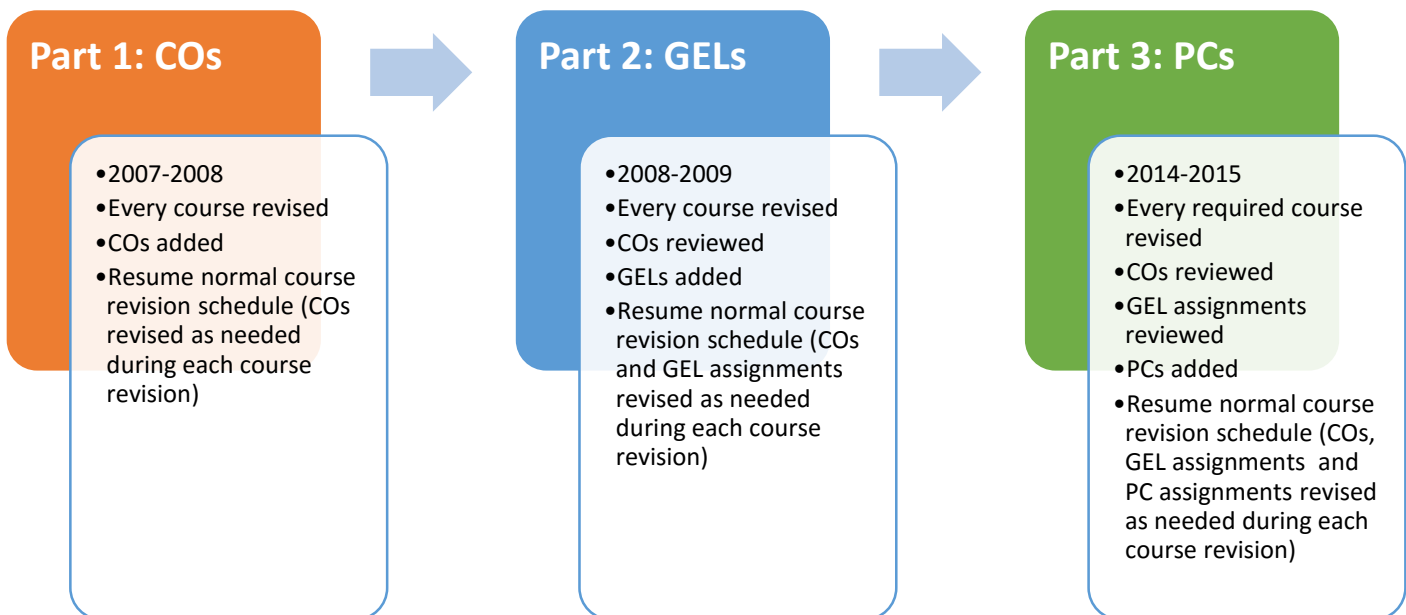
P.C.-4 Multiculturalism and Diversity Example: Health Administration 425

Students discuss the value of diversity and multiculturalism in the global healthcare workplace. Discuss the role and importance of organizational culture in promoting organizational change, organizational learning, and quality of healthcare.

The analysis of student performance for the purpose of improving courses and better preparing students for further education and/or employment is the motivation behind the multi-tiered student outcomes assessment program at KU. Parties responsible for the evaluation of the data from the CLA program include the faculty, course leads, department chairs, assistant deans, deans, KU Academic Assessment Team and KU Records Analysis & Reporting Team; all of whom examine student outcome data including COs, GELs, and PCs to identify areas of strength and opportunity in student performance, course quality, data collection, data analysis, and more. Based on the data and program review, the university has made a significant investment of time, talent, and resources to developing and improving the outcomes assessment program.

Implementation of the outcomes assessment program has required a major investment of resources at each step in the process and as part of our ongoing course revision schedule. As the graphic below indicates, the university has funded course revisions to implement each new tier of the program. In addition to the regularly scheduled course revisions, as each step in the program was added the faculty and curriculum teams have revised every course offered at the institution. Revising all courses, not once, but three times as the need for each new portion of the assessment program became evident, has been no small venture.

Part 1: COs

- 2007-2008
- Every course revised
- COs added
- Resume normal course revision schedule (COs revised as needed during each course revision)

Part 2: GELs

- 2008-2009
- Every course revised
- COs reviewed
- GELs added
- Resume normal course revision schedule (COs and GEL assignments revised as needed during each course revision)

Part 3: PCs

- 2014-2015
- Every required course revised
- COs reviewed
- GEL assignments reviewed
- PCs added
- Resume normal course revision schedule (COs, GEL assignments and PC assignments revised as needed during each course revision)

Further, in 2011 a new grading tool called the Learning Outcomes Manager (LOM) was developed and introduced on the learning management system platform (image left). The LOM tool allows instructors to quickly evaluate all the outcomes associated with a student's assignment (COs, GELs, and/or PCs) while grading the assignment for the course, thereby saving the instructors from having to evaluate the same work multiple times. The tool prompts instructors with the possible scores for each outcome allowing for more accurate and consistent application of the rubric. Note that the scoring expectations for each outcome become visible when an instructor scrolls over each score in the dropdown menu. A complete view of the scoring rubric is also available by clicking on the link located above the dropdown.

Professional development for evaluating outcomes has been provided at the university level by

Kaplan's Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL). The CTL includes professional development for evaluating outcomes as part of the initial program for new faculty members. The CTL also renews the training associated with evaluation of student outcomes for all faculty members approximately every two years and evaluates the training effectiveness. As part of a study in October 2015, the university conducted a survey and evaluation of the faculty related to course level assessment. On the evaluation portion of the study, faculty members answered correctly at a rate greater than 65% on six out of eight questions. The evaluation provided information on areas of strength and opportunity in the CLA training programs and will guide further training initiatives. CTL also is exploring new formats for delivering the training in order to keep the material fresh and relevant, and instructors now complete regularly scheduled multimedia courses on outcomes assessment and demonstrate mastery of the content in order to remain on the active teaching rosters. The professional development and the introduction of the LOM tool have noticeably decreased scoring issues and are believed to have improved the quality of scoring on the learning outcomes. The most recent university-wide outcomes related professional development was provided in the first quarter of 2015. Ongoing training in outcomes assessment is part of the university's commitment to a quality learning assessment program.

At the department level, student performance is now, and has been, part of the ongoing monitoring of course metrics. Department chairs in conjunction with course leads review the mean student scores for COs and GELs (PCs being too new for significant data to be available) comparing the current term mean to the mean of previous terms. When anomalies are seen, the chairs have the ability to review the data at the specific section and assignment level in an effort to determine the potential cause. Anomalies could be caused by student factors, such as a holiday occurring during a particular unit, instructor factors, such as a poor course/instructor talent match, or university factors, such as a student portal problem. Chairs and course leads can use the information gathered to better plan for such events in the future, to address course issues during the next course revision cycle, or to provide additional professional development for scoring assessment outcomes as a complement to the university-wide development program.
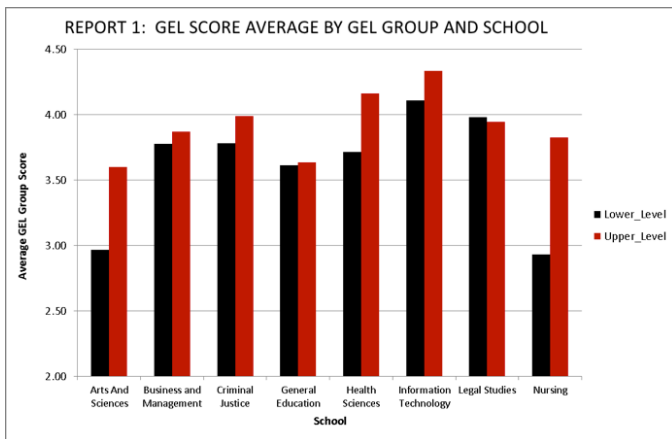
Additionally, chairs and course leads monitor the impact of course revisions looking for trends. Positive trends in the course metrics associated with course revisions are obviously the goal. Negative metric trends are investigated to determine if there is an issue with the instruction, assignments, support materials, or other item(s) that can be addressed in order to improve student performance. Although obviously less desirable, negative trends still provide valuable information that can be used to further improve courses across the assessment and student performance spectrum. Below are examples of reporting available for department chairs to review with course leads for all university courses (in this example College Algebra).

Course leads not only work with chairs to review metrics, they also share the course assessment data with faculty members teaching each course. Course lead meetings are held quarterly and all teaching faculty are invited. Not only are these meetings used for course leads to share assessment summaries with faculty members, but the meetings also provide an opportunity for professional development in course specific best practices, resource sharing, and course improvement suggestions. Many course leads have also created Google Communities to facilitate further sharing of resources and ideas.

Criterion 4: Evidence of Improvement and Continuing Commitment to the Processes

As described above, the CLA program at Kaplan University began with the Course Outcomes (COs) in 2007. As part of continuous improvement and innovation, KU leadership, faculty, and centralized curriculum specialists continuously evaluate 1) student achievement on outcomes to ensure that those outcomes are supported instructionally, 2) industry standards to ensure our programs/courses/outcomes meet those standards, and 3) employers' expectations to ensure our graduates are prepared for 21st Century careers. For the COs, the reevaluation has been ongoing for nearly ten years. Through this process, we identify areas of improvement in our programs and our courses. When we revise a course, on average every 18 months, we start by reviewing the course outcomes to ensure they align with the program outcomes, the course assessments, and the students' needs. This outcome mapping process ensures that our students' learning is scaffolded with content and practice that is at the correct level and then evaluated with appropriate assessments. The ongoing revision cycle places COs under nearly constant scrutiny so as to be responsive to student needs. While reviewed at each revision, COs are modified when the data analysis indicates a modification would provide better instruction for students based on relevant factors. One example of the need for an outcome revision might be an industry standard change for objectives in a nursing class. Course Outcomes are the framework around which all course assignment are scaffolded.

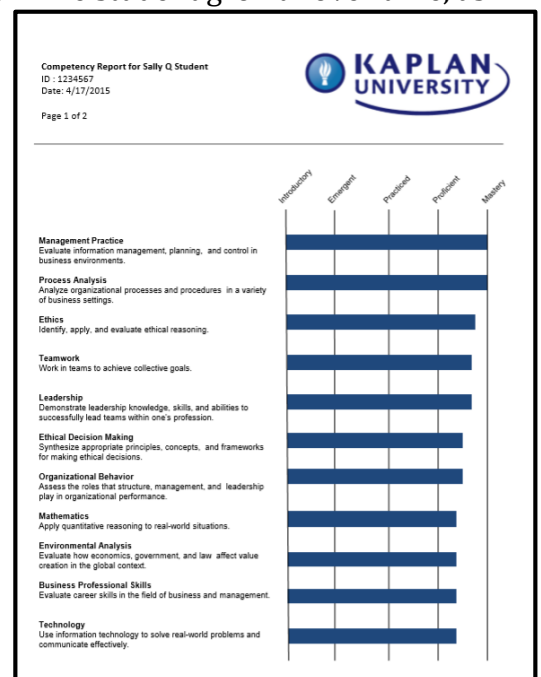REPORT 1: GEL SCORE AVERAGE BY GEL GROUP AND SCHOOL

Since introduction in 2008, the General Education Literacies have been incorporated into every undergraduate course at KU. In early 2016, the GEL committees, inter-disciplinary faculty teams responsible for maintaining the GEL standards in each of the nine literacy areas, began a review of the GEL outcomes and the grading rubrics. The review process will continue throughout the year with the mission to determine which, if any, GEL outcomes and/or grading rubrics should be rewritten or replaced. Included in the university's 2017 Strategic Plan is implementation of the revised GELs requiring or curriculum teams to determine which courses need to be revised to conform with new and updated outcomes. GELs distribute the general education literacies throughout each student's degree program and far beyond the general education core classes.

An analysis of 2013-2014 GEL data was performed to determine student growth over time, as displayed above. Data indicated performance improved across the various schools for students in upper classes as compared to lower classes. Although not a matched pairs comparison, the results of such a large sample, 10,000+ students, is indicative of growth over time for students across the GELs.

The Professional Competencies have not yet generated significant data when compared to the other outcomes in the assessment program. Nevertheless, what data is available appears promising. When compared to the standards provided by the National Network of Business and Industry Associations, the PCs close any gaps previously existing in our outcomes assessment program. Graduates will now be able to demonstrate the knowledge and skills employers are actively seeking.

A more recent improvement to the CLA program comes in the form of information sharing. The university provides students with reports on performance on the COs, GELs, and PCs via the Competency Report (image right). As a complement

to the student's academic transcript, the Competency Report allows each student to view a performance summary on the outcome assessments he/she has completed to date. Students can use this information to determine areas of strength and opportunity. Further, students are able to print a copy of the Competency Report to share with perspective employers as a means to demonstrate skills acquisition.

Having a tiered launch of the assessment program has allowed the results at each step to improve practice for the next iteration. For example, there were many lessons learned during the GELs implementation process, which dramatically improved the process during the PCs implementation. The GELs were developed during a time when significant portions of the full time faculty were in attendance for yearly Curriculum Institutes. The face-to-face nature of the institute allowed for frank discussions about the outcomes, sub-outcomes, assessment, and implementation of the GELs.

At the time the PCs were being developed, the curriculum work had evolved into a virtual format; however, the Dean of the School of General Education, with the full support of the Provost's Office, hosted a two-day, face-to-face event in Florida to allow the PC committees the same opportunity to develop the outcomes, sub-outcomes, and rubrics as had been afforded the GEL committee members. The PCs were implemented in much the same manner as the GELs, which had already proven to be effective. A secondary benefit of implementing the PCs in much the same way as the GELs was that the process also provided consistency for the faculty.

The faculty at Kaplan University has established an assessment program that exposes students to discipline specific, general education, and professional concepts in each course taken. This allows student to develop a deeper understanding and demonstrate in a meaningful way learning across a spectrum of objectives. At left is a graphic to illustrate the various assessments that may be included in a typical course at the university.

At Kaplan University, we have instituted a multi-facetted approach to student learning outcome assessment, which we believe will improve instructional design, drive institutional decision-making, and increase the career options for our students by clearly demonstrating student knowledge and skills acquisition. As mentioned prior, *Inside Higher Ed* considered the Kaplan program relevant enough to dedicate an article to detailing the university's odyssey toward outcomes assessment.

Kaplan University is a data-informed practice institution with the CLA program as an example. We are not content to sit back on our laurels and will continue to strengthen each area of our program by continually reviewing outcomes and revising as need. We will also, if necessary, add to the program if further areas of opportunity are identified. Finally, we strive to improve all of higher education by sharing the details and results of our programs at conferences and in publications.

The Kaplan course level assessment program is unique and exceptional. The program allows students to demonstrate discipline specific learning, general knowledge, and professional skills and potentially positions Kaplan graduates above others in a highly competitive job market. With this application, the Kaplan University team has demonstrated why our Course Learning Assessment Program is deserving of a 2016 Exemplary Program Award for Improvement-Revision or Enhancement of Core Program.