MEMORANDUM

TO: Catherine Christo, University Assessment Coordinator
FROM: Jackie R. Donath, Chair
Department of Humanities and Religious Studies


1. What goals or learning objectives were assessed in AY 2006-2007?
The faculty teaching HRS 140: Exploring World Religions assessed the learning goals for analytical reading and expository writing skills:
   “Students in HRS courses will develop and demonstrate the ability to examine complex issues and write about them in clear, purposeful and analytical prose essays which summarize, evaluate and integrate texts outside their own experience and use appropriate structure, development, usage and reference sources.”

2. How did you assess these learning outcomes?
The participating faculty agreed to a common essay prompt and administered the prompt either as short paper assignment or as an essay question on a take-home examination. Overall, faculty reported satisfaction with the result, with an average of 70% of students scoring at the “C” level or better on the activity.

Candidly, what was most clear from this effort was the resistance of many faculty members to any sort of review of their students’ learning in a systematic and programmatic way. Additionally, despite the chair’s best efforts to involve the department faculty in assessment and reflection on student learning, most faculty continued to assert that they were “teaching well,” even while complaining about the level of their students’ performance.

3. As a result of faculty reflection on these results are there any program changes anticipated?
Change seem less important at this point than designing and implementing a meaningful and “maintainable” set of assessment activities on a programmatic level. The HRS faculty has not addressed this issue and as our dated assessment plan reveals, we will need help organizing a structure and set of measures that we can regularly and systematically use to assess our educational effectiveness.

4. Did your department engage in any other assessment activities such as the development of rubrics, course alignment?
HRS department faculty members spent much of the fall of 2006 responding to the requirements of the General Education Area C assessment cycle. 98% of the
department’s courses were included in that review. Most instructors adopted the HRS 190 writing rubric as part of their GE assessment plans.

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year? 2007-2008 will signal the beginning of the HRS self-study/program review cycle. The department is participating in the experimental pilot. I would like to take advantage of that process to focus the department’s efforts on assessment and the alignment of our curriculum with the General Education program OR to engage the faculty in a discussion of the learning goals associated with our core courses (HRS 10, 11, 70, 71, 105, 108, 140 and 190.) It is clear that the HRS Department must revisit and re-vision its assessment plan and the self-study process may provide us with a framework and timetable to do so.

cc: Jeffrey Mason