Department of Humanities and Religious Studies
ANNUAL ASSESSMENT REPORT
2007-2008

1. What question or issue were you addressing with this activity?

The department undertook two assessment activities during the 2007-2008 academic year.

1. Under the direction of the University General Education Policy/Graduation Requirements Committee, the department prepared assessment reports for all GE Area C1 and GE Area C4 classes taught in the spring of 2008. Those section-based reports were provided to the Committee in June of 2008. That material will be included in the GE Assessment report prepared by the Committee’s Assessment Coordinator in the fall of 2008.

2. As part of the department’s participation in the self study pilot organized by the Program Review Oversight Committee (PROC) and Academic Affairs, a proposal was submitted and accepted that organized the department to begin to assess the alignment of its curriculum with General Education and the University Baccalaureate Learning Goals (see attached Self Study Proposal).

HRS has been slow to undertake regularized assessment of courses or the program. The self study and program review process holds some promise for helping to normalize the process for us.

2. What data did you collect to address this question or issue?

All HRS faculty members teaching courses in the spring 2008 semester were asked to assess their courses in the context of the appropriate GE Area C and Baccalaureate Learning Goal. A template was prepared and the Faculty Assessment Coordinator (Terry Underwood) and the chair of our Program Review Team (Amy Liu) were consulted as the template was designed to ensure that useful information would be generated by faculty members’ work. (see attached Assessment Template)

3. What did the data tell you?

Interestingly, particularly in the context of the department’s upcoming program review, the data seems to reveal a program faculty that may need to do further organizational learning. The HRS faculty effectively demonstrated the alignment of their courses (and by implication, the program) with the student learning outcomes developed for both General Education Area C and the Baccalaureate Learning Goals. Without exception, HRS faculty were able to offer specific examples of assignments and activities linked to the department’s goal of cultural literacy, the GE Area C (Arts and Humanities) learning goals and the Baccalaureate Learning Goals for “Cultural Legacy.” This information confirmed the department’s sense that the emphasis on cultural literacies which is present in the department’s course matrix is actually reflected in the department curriculum.

The HRS Faculty Assessment Reports reveal a faculty overwhelmingly committed to effective teaching. Every faculty member’s report revealed a considerable level of effort devoted to
developing, revising and improving the materials and content of their courses, with the intention of providing their students with exposure to “human accomplishments in the creative and performing arts and achievements of human thought.” (Baccalaureate Learning Goal for Cultural Literacy)

However, the faculty, both as individuals and the department as a whole seems to need to reform its program assessment activities to shift its focus from its goals for its teaching efforts to strategies that would strengthen student learning in the program.

In assessing their students’ learning, many faculty members identified students’ preparation and commitment to the general education portion of their degree plans as central elements in their success (or lack thereof) in meeting the learning goals HRS has identified as central to its mission. Course-based assessments indicate that many members of the HRS faculty will emphasize more tightly organized in-class assignments to prod their students’ learning. The department has not yet discussed if that sort of activity will “play out” on a programmatic level.

4. As a result of faculty reflection on these results, are there any program changes anticipated? 
The faculty has not yet spent much time reflecting on the results of this assessment. As an early activity related to the program review process, the department revisited its mission statement and made some revisions in its learning goals. The chair will prepare a qualitative review of the spring 2008 HRS Faculty Assessment Reports for the department retreat in August 2008. One might anticipate programmatic changes as an outgrowth of focused attention to the issue of evaluating student learning, but a discussion of specific program changes will probably be delayed until the harmonic convergence of review of this assessment activity, completion of the department’s self study, and the recommendations of the program review team.

   a. If so, what are those changes?
      As indicated above, program changes are at least an academic year away.

   b. How will you know if these changes achieved the desired results?
      NA

5. What assessment activities are planned for the upcoming academic year? 
In 2008-2009, the Department of Humanities and Religious Studies will assess the next of its recently reconfigured learning goals—“Development of an empathetic understanding of human diversity within historical +cross-cultural contexts” which we believe also overlaps with several GE Area C criteria, thus facilitating our on-going, required assessment of GE.

We will also specifically assess HRS courses in GE Areas C2 (HRS 180) and C3 (HRS 10, 11, 70, 71, 140, 151, 161, 188) in the context of their previously prepared assessment plans in order to continue the assessment activities which are mandated by the department’s participation in General Education Program.
In preparation for a possible program change proposal for our LIBA program, we will develop learning goals for graduate classes and pilot at least one assessment activity in the LIBA Masters Degree Program in 2008-2009.

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