1. Program Learning Outcomes Assessed in AY 2009-10
For the academic year 2009-10, the Liberal Studies Program completed an assessment of program learning outcome number one: Students will develop effective written communication skills.

2. Methodologies Used to Assess Program Learning Outcome

   a. Measures

   Program Learning Outcome #1 was assessed directly in the Spring 2010 semester. The direct assessment was completed using a rubric to review a signature assignment in Liberal Studies (LBST) 110 - California Studies from 5 randomly selected students. The signature assignment was completed by students during May 2010. The assessment rubric for this outcome was developed by the College of SSIS based on feedback by faculty members. The review of the signature writing assignment was performed by the Director of Liberal Studies (the only full time faculty member in the program). Another faculty member and a staff person associated with this program agreed to review and score papers, but did not. The Rubric on written communication was designed to look at the following components:

   Definition
   Written Communication is the development and expression of ideas in writing for a particular audience and purpose. SSIS students should be able to communicate effectively in writing about social phenomena from a social science perspective.

   Student Learning Outcomes
   Students should be able to:
   1. Focus writing on a specific purpose and development
   2. Produce logical, coherent, and well-structured writing
   3. Tailor writing to a specific audience
   4. Apply appropriate writing standards
   5. Produce a clear and easy to understand paper
   6. Use citations when appropriate
   7. Use graphic presentations when appropriate

   b. Findings

   The direct assessment of Program Learning Outcome #1 reveals strengths as well as areas requiring improvement. Specific elements related to how effective the Liberal Studies Program prepares students in the area of written communication. Table 1 represents the percentage of scores in each area of the writing rubric. Scores of 5 students’ signature assignment papers were used to assess effective writing.
c. Areas in which students are achieving expectations
All areas of writing were found to be at a high level during this evaluation. It was found that Liberal Studies students are highly competent in tailoring writing to a specific audience. 75% of the student scores were at or above the median score of the rubric (3) in this area. The highest area of evaluation was on “focus writing on a specific purpose.” Student writing reflects that 95% of the samples were scored above the median score of 3. The ability to produce logical, coherent, and well structured writing was also a relatively high score with 87% of students scoring a 3 or above. Finally the ability to apply appropriate writing standards found 78% of students scoring 3 or above.

d. Areas in which improvement are needed
The two lowest areas are “tailoring writing to a specific audience,” and “apply appropriate writing standards.” These two areas of writing were still scored at a 76% passage rate of a score at least 3 or above. Since the passage rate for the Writing Proficiency Exam (WPE) average 70% for the first time test taker passage and the SSIS scores are 76% for native students and 72% for transfer students, the passage rate on the various aspect of this signature assignment or equal to or higher than the WPE scores for the college and higher than the university as a whole. While these scores are not equivalent to the WPE scores, the current area of assessment and the WPE can give an overall view of the effectiveness of writing among Liberal Studies majors.

3. Anticipated Program Changes
   a. Description of proposed changes
These results were reviewed by the Liberal Studies Faculty Council. No immediate program changes were recommended by faculty as a result of this assessment device since results were very positive. The discussion included the possible inclusion of more faculty members in the assessment process. Another recommended change to the
program was to create a capstone course where assessment and signature assignments could be more readily controlled. This recommended capstone course has been delayed because it would generate more FTES for the Liberal Studies Program and in the present budget climate that is not possible.

b. Determination of future achievement of results
Since this was the second year of assessment of writing, but first with the College of SSIS written communication’s rubric, the decision was to continue to evaluate this area for the next academic year to provide an assessment with some longitudinal context. The hope is that students would continue to achieve at the current level of achievement in all areas of writing.

4. Other Assessment Activities Completed in AY 2009-10
Student data for the California Subject Examination for Teacher (CSET) was reviewed. The past practice was discussed of comparing eventual passage rate of scores with single setting data for the state. Since this assessment plan did not seem to compare like data it was decided to discontinue this assessment plan. The eventual passage rate continues to be approximately 98% of Liberal Studies major eventually take and pass all areas of CSET. This is higher than any other major on campus, but is not surprising since the Liberal Studies major is the likely undergraduate major of choice for those students who have decided to be elementary school teachers. New reporting software by the Pearson company may facilitate comparing writing on the CSET with our internal measures.

5. Planned Assessment Activities
A third year of writing assessment is planned for the 2010-2011 academic year with great faculty support. This sample will be collected in the fall semester to allow more time for assessment and a larger sample size. This will allow longitudinal look at student writing using the same rubric for the first time.

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