Women’s Studies Assessment Report (2010-11)

The Women’s Studies Department conducted an assessment of its program learning goals and objectives for the academic year 2010-11. The assessment was designed to meet the following objective: “Students who graduate with a baccalaureate degree in Women’s Studies will demonstrate strong critical analytical, application, and written communication skills. They will be able to effectively present feminist perspectives through sophisticated, well-organized and clearly developed research papers.”

Following the recommendations of our previous year’s Assessment Report, this year, the department assessed student’s strength in the following areas: 1) competence in feminist perspectives and theory; 2) application of feminist perspectives to social issues; and, 3) effective written communication.

Method of Assessment

The 3 main categories were assessed through one direct measure: the final research paper for the capstone seminar in Women’s studies: WOMS 180: Seminar in Feminist Theory. The final research assignment prompt (see attached Appendix 1) was prepared after taking into consideration the department learning goals and objectives, synthesized in the above 3 criteria. The Grading Rubric generated for assessment was made available to all students (See attached Appendix 2). Students were encouraged to develop their own topics for the assignment based on specific instructions provided in the prompt.

Findings

There were two Faculty members involved in the assessment process: the one-time instructor of the course and the department assessment co-ordinator. First the co-ordinator established the point-criteria for the review. Then the instructors individually read 6 student papers and gave points. The average was calculated and tabulated for assessment.

A total of 6 students were assessed on a scale of 4 to 1, where 4 = Highly Competent, 3 = Mostly Competent; 2 = Slightly competent, and 1 = Barely competent.

In category 1) Feminist Theory: 1 student was highly competent; 3 students were mostly competent; _1_ student was slightly competent (2); and _1_ student was barely competent (1).

In category 2) Application of feminist theory to social issues: 1 student was highly competent; 3 students were mostly competent; _1_ student was slightly competent (2)

In category 3) Written Communication: 1 student was highly competent; _1_ student was mostly competent; and _4_ students were slightly competent.

Conclusion
Following are the averages based on our direct assessment: In categories 1) and 2) 67% of the students were at and above competence. On the other hand, in category 3) Written Communication, only 33% of the majors were at or above the level of competence, while 67% of the students were only slightly competent.

These results reinforce the need for continuing the Writing Workshops which we had conducted last year, and as a result of which we had seen considerable improvement in student written communication. The year under assessment, however, we were forced to discontinue the workshop as the faculty conducting them was away on maternity leave.

We believe that the return of the faculty member who regularly teaches the course, will also further improve overall student performance in categories 1) and 2) as well. The department would like to use the same measures for assessment again next year, before arriving at any further conclusions regarding this year’s assessment.

**Future Plans**

Given the need for our majors to improve Written Communication skills, the department will continue to run writing workshops in the following academic year. We will continue to emphasize the significance of effective written communication for college graduation. Further, the department will use the same tools for assessment next year also, but come up with a more simplified version of the grading rubric. Based on the results of next year’s assessment, we will take steps to alter our pedagogic strategies, if necessary, in order to better prepare our majors for the future.