

Annual Assessment Report Summaries 2015-2016

Biology

This AAR presents data from the assessment of the four-year curriculum in the department of biology. The assessment focused on two major aspects of student learning – an established knowledge base within the biological sciences and a demonstrable competency in regard to the analysis of data and the application of biological concepts. Data were collected from responses of senior students to a locally produced examination that emphasized a knowledge of fundamental concepts and the analysis of presented data. Overall, the results indicate that our students have proficiency in both areas; however, a majority of students were found to be of greater proficiency in one area versus the other – specifically, many still struggle with the ability to analyze data and apply their knowledge. Overall, the results suggest that there is room for continued growth in how our curriculum serves our students. We are currently evaluating our curriculum, assessing its strengths and weaknesses, and finding ways that the curriculum can more uniformly serve our students in all valued aspects of the biological sciences.

Computer Science

The Department of Computer Science administers the Major Field Test (MFT) to graduating seniors. Our main expectation is that students perform roughly equivalently in the three areas (Programming and Software Engineering, Discrete Math and Algorithms, and Architecture and Systems). This has not been the case. This is due at least in part to the small number of students participating and the resulting high variance in scores. We do see high scores in t Math and ar below the highest quartile). We believe this area to be a good predictor of overall performance in the major, and it is a strong focus of our program. Perhaps the most important conclusion to draw from this observation is the need for the program to maintain a strong discrete math requirement.

Economics

Over one full day in early June all the members of the Economics Department collaborated in the scoring of 22 Senior Project papers according to a rubric reflecting three of our student learning goals. The same rubric was employed during the assessment exercise conducted over the last four years. On average, our students demonstrated a high level of capable achievement in all the examined areas. The dispersion of the scores was small. Considered individually, slightly less than half of the assessed papers received an aggregate mean score of of this exercise continue to be refined.

These strategies to close the feedback loop would be extensions of our ongoing efforts on curricular reform. Finally, the evidence accumulated through our repeated assessment exercises

Educational Studies

All licensure candidates in the elementary and secondary Teacher Education Program were assessed on each learning goal using the Final Student Teaching Evaluation, Education Teacher Performance Assessment (edTPA), ISBE Assessment of Professional Teaching (APT), and the Senior Exit Survey.

Following an earlier recommendation from the Assessment Committee that we separate embedded goals from our previous two goals, we developed a set of five goals. We also made information about the goals more accessible to students. The goals are now available on the department webpage. In addition, we discuss them in our classes and with our teaching assistants. From the exit survey results, it is clear that our majors are better informed about the goals and recognize that, for the most part, the goals were addressed in their classes. The exit survey data indicate that our seniors continue to wish for courses with content specific to certain careers, e.g., a course on financial mathematics for students interested in

Analysis of the correlation between CCTDI scores and other variables (e.g., ACT scores, collegiate GPA, performance on the HESI Pharm and E2, and NCLEX-RN®) is ongoing, although preliminary findings do not support strong correlations. The School of Nursing Curriculum Committee formed a workgroup to examine the effectiveness of critical thinking evaluation and curricular modifications that could enhance critical thinking. A decision to retain the CCTDI was made to assure analysis across decades of data and because no superior direct measure was identified. Consensus was reached by the School of Nursing to continue using the CCTDI in the 2016-

and a survey of faculty teaching upper-level laboratory (EXP) courses in the department also suggest students have been exposed to a consistent level of instruction regarding the critical analysis, interpretation, reporting, and execution of scientific inquiry within the science of psychology. In the future, we will directly measure student outcomes and experiences in our EXP courses to better determine if that aspect of our curriculum is meeting our student learning goals and whether or not we need to make adjustments in our EXP curriculum to better serve students as well as better achieve learning outcomes.

Religion

The Religion Department assessed the following goal: Students will develop an in-depth understanding of the culture and history of at least two religious traditions, as well as an awareness of the most significant themes in comparative religious studies. The measure used in this assessment is a direct one. It assesses, more specifically, the student papers produced in the Religion capstone course, REL 490: Senior Seminar in Religion.

What might we change? Our main response to this question is that we should engage in further discussion of course design and expectations for the Senior Seminar will help us understand how religious experiences.

The student papers overall achieve our stated learning goals of study in breadth and depth, but those who fall short do so because of several challenges in the structure of the institution, our major, and the course itself. We do not see all of these as problems, so we do not recommend Also, the course and its assignments are not designed to provide all of the answers to our assessment questions. We see that most students have some knowledge of other religions, but avoid advanced comparative discussions--and we think that this is appropriate. These individual papers may not be the right materials in which to search for achievement of so many complex goals.

We might change the assignments to include a short reflection paper written by the students on their own path to the Senior Seminar and how they have in fact achieved this and other goals of the major. We might emphasize the use of primary sources in the senior seminar research papers and encourage the instructor in a given year to give priority to such work in more focused research. We might also change how we do assessment.

Sociology

In AY 2013-2014, the sociology program undertook an assessment of our 2013 senior writing, in order to measure one aspect of our student learning goals, that research paper from conceptualization to

This year, we finished this 4-year cycle by conducting a direct assessment of senior writing, using the same assignment and rubric, in order to determine whether the changes we implemented based on the assessment of 2013 papers had achieved their the Tc(a)4 Tm[281 1 2090(e)-5(a)4(r)-6(,)JTJETBhain 39.91 267.53 Tm[)JTJ09

to improve student learning! On this basis, we plan to make these course-level assignment goals a permanent part of our collective efforts in order to assure student success.

Spanish

In 2015-2016 academic year the Hispanic Studies Department assessed the cultural knowledge of students in our three culture classes using a department-wide direct measure. Preliminary results show that our students are meeting our goals. Hispanic Studies is considering the creation of assessable learning goals for the obligatory study abroad requirement and also creating a signature work project.

However, the juniors and the seniors aren't much farther ahead on this trajectory, and this indicates a problem. With the curricular adjustments accompanying the development of the new Signature Work program, the School of Theatre Arts needs to better embed the pedagogy focused on this learning goal in its formal curriculum, rather than relying so heavily on advising to deliver this element of the BA. In addition, faculty advising students in the BA major may need some additional training so that this learning goal does not rely so heavily on the labor of a single faculty member. We will look at this learning goal again in four years to see if these adjustments have resulted in improvement in this area.

Women and Gender Studies

rough the major courses in WGS, students will learn to: 1. demonstrate an understanding of feminist perspectives on the human experience and to communicate that understanding through writing for assessment entailed providing a pre-test and post-test to senior WGS majors in the Senior Seminar with two essential questions: (A.) What can we learn from the concept or interpretation of ideas that we could identify as a feminist perspective.

The Learning Committee reviewed and graded the responses in 2015. Both graders ranked the answers from the first set of questionnaires as mostly

noting the fuller and more perceptive answers given by the students in December. We agreed that this assessment indicated that students were learning about feminism and feminist perspectives in other courses in WGS, but had gained a more accurate and complex understanding by the current year.