

Departmental and Program Assessment Annual Assessment Plan Report

Academic Year: 2010-2011

Academic Unit: Challenges of the Contemporary World

Chair: Todd Berryman

Student Assessment Plan (SAP) – Basic Check-list – If your answers are “yes” a question in this section, no further explanation is necessary.

1. Is there a current assessment plan for your department, program, or general education component? Current implies that this SAP is used by the department. It does not have to be rewritten unless your assessment plan has changed. It should be on the web at <http://www.hendrix.edu/academics/academics.aspx?id=47328>.
 yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce a plan by the end of the next academic year. [See summary report.]*
2. Does the current SAP include student learning goals? Departmental/programmatic/general education component student learning goals should be able to stand alone as a list without pages of explanatory commentary.
 yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce student learning goals by the end of the next academic year.*
3. Does your SAP include a list of assessment data collected yearly? Assessment data lists should be able to stand alone without pages of explanatory commentary. Additionally, collected data should be of enough value to the department that it is read yearly. If not, it is probably not of sufficient use to collect.
 yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce an assessment data list by the end of the next academic year.*
4. Are student learning goals available to students on the web on the departmental/programmatic page(s)?
 yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce student access to the learning goals by the end of the next academic year.*
5. Are student learning goals, appropriate for each course, included in the course syllabi in your department or program?
 yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce student learning goals by the end of the next academic year.*
6. Does your SAP include direct assessments? “Direct” refers to evaluated student work.
 yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce a direct student assessment tool by the end of the next academic year.*
7. Describe which indirect assessments in your assessment plan have been collected for the year and which have not. “Indirect” refers to student surveys, interviews, or opinions.
 yes no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce an indirect student assessment tool by the end of the next academic year.*

Student Assessment Plan Development - Departments and programs who have a complete and current SAP should consider the next step in SAP development. *This could easily be the annual action item for your department or program (next section #5).*

1. As a next step in SAP development, departments/programs are encouraged begin working on an assessment audit to determine how student learning goals fit across the courses in the major. This could be as complicated as a full grid of student learning goals, or a single learning goal, across the courses in the major. (This has not been required of departments, but it is a recommended next step when the SAP is up to date.)

yes no *If yes, please provide the results in either in prose or as a table.*

Yearly Assessment Report – each department or program is expected to have assessment discussions for at least two hours each academic year. If necessary, help is available from David Sutherland, just call.

1. What was your planned action item identified in your last report?
2. Briefly summarize the topics discussed in your annual assessment meeting. (If you have not met this year, why not and when do you plan to meet?)
3. What was the conclusion of your assessment discussion and how did the collected assessment data inform your conclusion? Specifically describe any curricular or programmatic changes that have been made that were based, at least in part, on the data in your SAP.
4. What are the plans for improving student learning in your unit?
5. Define at least one new action item for your unit that will be a goal of your assessment discussions next year?
(This action item could be to work on the SAP or on the assessment audit to correlate student learning goals with specific courses, described above.)

Summary Report for Challenges of the Contemporary World

The future of the Challenges of the Contemporary World component of the Collegiate Center is uncertain, at best. In January of 2010, Hendrix College embarked upon an in-depth review of its current Collegiate Center. In January of 2011, the Collegiate Center Review Committee (CCRC) filed its formal findings. Its ultimate conclusion in regard to CW is that the program ought to be retired. Of all the recommendations presented by the CCRC, this statement was its most definitive.

That recommendation was based in large part upon an internal review conducted by the Challenges of the Contemporary World Committee. In order to help the CCRC better understand the current state of CW, our committee began by asking questions such as: How many CW courses does Hendrix currently have in the catalog? How are those courses distributed among the 33 majors we have at Hendrix? When do students take their first CW course? And how many CW courses do Hendrix students take during their academic career? No such data had ever been collected. With the help of David Sutherland, the Registrar's Office, and the Office of Information Technology, we were able to collect the necessary raw data to help us generate answers to those questions.

What we learned is that, as of the start of the 2010-2011 academic year, there were 121 CW-coded courses at Hendrix, which constitutes approximately 8% of the college's course offerings. More than half of those (precisely 64) were offered this year. Of Hendrix's 33 majors, 24 of them offer CW courses. But most CW courses are offered within the Social Sciences. This is especially true of the Department of Politics and International Relations, which has 25 CW courses, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, which also has 25, and the History Department, which has 17. In contrast, the Natural Sciences were grossly underrepresented, with only 7 CW courses being offered from that Area. We were also able to determine that 55% of students take their first CW course as freshers, 27% as sophomores, 11% as juniors, and 7% as seniors. Finally, based upon the raw data, it became clear that the overwhelming majority of our students (70%) take multiple CW courses.

Our committee also decided that it would be helpful to conduct an internal review of current CW courses to assess whether or not they satisfy the criteria listed in the catalog for CW coding. We randomly selected 10 courses to review. Our committee determined that, of those 10, only 5 clearly met that criteria, 2 clearly did not, and the committee was divided on the remaining 3.

At the same time the CW committee was gathering and analyzing this data, the CCRC was surveying the faculty for its views about the Collegiate Center in general. In regard to its CW component, the faculty exhibited less than enthusiastic support for the program. For example, of the 69 people who responded to the faculty survey, 30 thought CW was important, but 34 did not. What is more, only 13 respondents suggested that CW should remain in its current form.

The results of this investigation, in conjunction with survey data that suggests the Hendrix faculty has, at best, a lukewarm view of CW, indicates that CW will either need to undergo a massive restructuring or be retired. During the coming academic year, the Council on Academic Policy intends to continue the conversation about the Collegiate Center and, hopefully, guide us to a plan of action.

At this juncture, CW does not have an Assessment Plan in place. If CW survives next year, it will need to develop an Assessment Plan that not only prompts it to look introspectively at its self – its goals, its criteria, and so forth – but also one that allows it to measure student outcomes for an otherwise unwieldy and disjointed program. In other words, some sort of rubric would need to be created that would help judge those outcomes for more than one hundred disparate courses, offered in two-dozen majors, across all areas of the college that have, as a primary focus, any topic ranging from environmental studies, to ethnic studies, to gender studies, to other issues of world citizenship.