Departmental and Program Assessment
Annual Assessment Plan Report

Academic Year: ___2010-11_____

Academic Unit: _____Biology_____

Chair: ____Moran_____

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.

   X yes □ no *If no, provide a timeline that will produce a plan by the end of the next academic year.*

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.

   X 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.

   X 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)?

   X 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?

   X 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.

   X 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.

   X 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 X 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?
   Improving the Senior Survey

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?)
   1. We discussed the students' performance on the MFT exam which was somewhat lower than usual (still above the 90th Percentile).
   2. We discussed implementation of the new skills courses (Biological Communication and Biometry) that passed the faculty this year.

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.
   We concluded that this year's results on the MFT exam will require us to carefully monitor future student performance. It is possible that the somewhat lower results this year were simply random variation caused by the relatively small sample of our majors for a single year. Future years will determine if we are seeing a real decline in performance and if we will therefore need to make curricular adjustments. It should be noted that even with the slight decline in performance, the department is still scoring above the 90th percentile compared to all institutions taking the exam.

4. What are the plans for improving student learning in your unit?
   With the implementation of our new skills courses for the incoming freshman (2011-12) we expect to see substantial improvement in students' reading, writing, and analysis skills. By having these skills taught in specific classes, it will also allow faculty to focus more intensively on biological content in the core courses. This change may improve student performance on the MFT. The MCAT is also planning to institute a statistics portion of the exam which our new major requirements should assist.

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.)

   We are working on developing an assessment test to determine how well our new skills courses will work. Our plan in to test the next three graduating classes who will not have taken the skills courses and compare to the first few graduating classes that will take them. Since the MFT does not extensively test these skills we will develop additional questions for the MFT that can be added as an addendum.