**Departmental and Program Assessment**
**Annual Assessment Plan Report**

**Academic Year:** *2009-10*
**Co-Coordinators:** *Dwayne Collins and Carole Herrick*

**Academic General Education Unit:** *Explorations (new student seminar; Collegiate Center)*

**Student Assessment Plan (SAP) – Basic Check-list** – If your answers are "yes" to 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 the department uses this SAP. 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=7264.

   *YES*

   *If no, provide a timeline that will produce a plan by the end of the next academic year.* *(N/A)*

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*
   *A current list of Course Goals and related Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs) is included with the SAP.*

   *If no, provide a timeline that will produce student learning goals by the end of the next academic year.* *(N/A)*

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*
   *More detailed information and commentary relative to yearly assessment data are included in the yearly Explorations assessment reports available at this link site.*

   *If no, provide a timeline that will produce an assessment data list by the end of the next academic year.* *(N/A)*

4. Are student learning goals available to students on the web on the departmental/programmatic page(s)?

   *NO*
   *Construction of an Explorations web page is in progress. The Explorations learning goals/ILOs (Titled: Course Goals and Intended Learning Outcomes) are provided with the course syllabus in the notebook materials provided to each student enrolled in Explorations.*

*If no, provide a timeline that will produce student access to the learning goals by the end of the next academic year.*

*The Explorations ILOs will be posted to the course web page when that page goes live.*

5. Are student learning goals, appropriate for each course, included in the course syllabi in your department or program?

   *YES*

   *If no, provide a timeline that will produce student learning goals by the end of the next academic year.* *(N/A)*

6. Does your SAP include direct assessments? "Direct" refers to evaluated student work.

   *YES*
   *Each of the topics/assignments subject to direct assessments in Explorations receives in-depth emphasis in a multi-year rotational pattern. Thus, though a general discussion of all direct assessments in the past fall's iteration of the course take place in the yearly Explorations Working Group meetings (December assessment meeting, May and August workshops), the Group's attention focuses each year on formal consideration of ONE direct assessment, that assessment area identified and prepared for teaching in working Group meetings (December, May, August) prior to the fall Explorations course.*

   *Based on a national model for direct assessment practices (Walvoord), the Explorations Working Group discussions concerning direct assessments of student work (Fall, 2008 course), resulted in an Explorations, 2009 focus (for the third consecutive year) on direct assessment of the major Reading/Writing components of the course (Student Learning Goal 2 and related ILOs #2-1 and 2-2). To prepare students for the two major Fall, 2009 essay assignments in this direct assessment area (Spiegelman: MAUS; Davies: "How to be an Expatriate"), standard higher order concerns (HOC) for collegiate-level writing were emphasized and materials provided and discussed. Peer review/input components were employed in lieu of a "revision" component for either of these two papers.*

   *Though Reading/Writing was again selected for the direct assessment course focus for Fall, 2009, additional course changes were made in the other two main components of the course (Transitions; Engaged Learning) based on discussion of direct assessments in these areas. The commitment of the Explorations Working Group is to rotate to a formal direct assessment in an area OTHER than Reading/Writing for the Fall, 2010 course.*

   *If no, provide a timeline that will produce a direct student assessment tool by the end of the next academic year.*
   *(N/A)*

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.

   *Two indirect assessments are collected in Explorations each year. The two assessments collected for Fall, 2009 are as follows:*

   *<u>Explorations Student Feedback Form—Fall, 2009</u>*
   *•Collects student opinion of all course topics/activities relative to the following statement : "This topic or activity contributed to my understanding of Hendrix and/or the expectations and responsibilities of being a Hendrix student."*
   *•Collects additional student opinion on the most positive and least positive aspects of the*

*Explorations Pre- and Post-Test Surveys—Fall, 2009*
*•Collects student impressions of their knowledge and abilities in topic areas covered by Explorations, both at point of entry and point of exit for the course. (NOTE: We do not posit that any changes are due solely to the Explorations course. Rather, we use the information and trends that are provided by the Survey as feedback for further development of the course, assuming that the content of Explorations does, to some extent, contribute to changes in the knowledge and abilities of students in topic/activity areas covered by the course.)*

*If no, provide a timeline that will produce an indirect student assessment tool by the end of the next academic year.*
*(N/A)*

**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.)

   *NO*
   *An assessment audit, as described above, is not applicable to Explorations as a stand-alone course, though an audit involving multi-courses in the Collegiate Center might be considered among appropriate faculty and academic affairs personnel.*

   *If yes, please provide the results in either in prose or as a table.* *(N/A)*

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

1. What was your planned action item identified in your last report?

*Arising from the Fall, 2008 Explorations assessment discussions (December assessment meeting, May and August workshops), the "next action layer" for the course identified in our last report was to undertake a review and reworking of the TRANSITIONS sections of the Fall, 2009 syllabus—liberal learning and ties to Hendrix, academic expectations, academic self-authorship, choices and resources, mentoring connections, academic and social ethics and integrity, etc.*
*That review and reworking took place in small working sub-groups prior to and between the May and August, 2009 Explorations workshops. Based on that work, the Fall, 2009 syllabus for Explorations reflected a significant reworking of several of the course TRANSITIONS topics, in particular the following:*

*• Liberal learning and specific Hendrix instantiations (new reading to accompany the Hendrix Statement of Purpose reading, new reading/discussion of general education requirements with short reflective paper)*

*• Academic self-authorship (new self-reflective questionnaire in weeks 3-4), and*

*• Mentoring connections (required 4-5 week meeting with academic advisor (including discussion of self-reflective questionnaire).*

*Assessment meeting discussions of December 10, 2009 and in the May and August, 2010 workshops (Walvoord model) relative to these reworked areas illuminated appropriate paths for continued work in these areas for Fall, 2010 (see below).*

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?)

   *The December 10, 2009 and May/August workshop assessment sessions for the Fall, 2009 Explorations course included discussion of the following topics relative to the three main content components of the course:*

*TRANSITIONS:*
*• The sections most positively impacted by the group reworking of this section for Fall, 2009 were in the areas of the general education reading (writing, too, though not well received by students) and the required academic advising meeting. Self-reflection questionnaire for that meeting needs revision (shorten!), but generally accomplishing its goal of making students aware of the need for self-authorship.*
*• Nussbaum reading on liberal learning: dovetailed well with general ed/Statement of Purpose work. Nussbaum was not liked by students. Modifications to the liberal arts reading for Fall, 2010 were offered..*

*WRITING/READING:*
*• In general, still too much—do less with more depth is the consensus*
*• Spiegelman (MAUS)—effective reading, but needs more transparency with students as to the broad liberal arts rationale behind reading and writing activities at Hendrix—beyond personal relevance.*
*• Davies (Expatriate)—reading continues well received and relevant*
*• Insufficient discussion time on MAUS—needed 2 days*

*• Overall, student writing is stronger in the HOC (higher order concerns) areas we emphasized in Fall, 2009, but Working Group concerns with shortness of papers and lack of a revision component remain. Reduction to one paper versus two short ones had support. It was felt that one paper with revision might be a most successful approach. The group consensus was that peer review in the context of Explorations may be less valuable than paper revision.*

*• Goal: Use readings to learn how to read critically, and to inform effective writing.*

*ENGAGED LEARNING:*
*-Need to add "in class" emphasis on the option (noted in printed course materials) of preparing a "true" Odyssey proposal in fulfillment of the mini-Odyssey requirement.*
*-Emphasizing the oral presentation and not requiring a written reflection met with mixed group feedback, but in general was felt to be favorable. Next year need much more intentionality in providing resources for an effective oral presentation (rubric, peer review, etc.)*

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.

*The broad conclusions of the assessment discussion of December 10, 2009 (with follow up in May and August, 2010 workshops leading into the Fall, 2010 course) were all tied explicitly to the collected assessment data. The following conclusions were informed by the strongest trends reflected in that assessment data:*

*TRANSITIONS*
*-We succeeded in bringing more coherence and definition to some of the TRANSITIONS sections of the course. Group decisions relating to changing, keeping, or omitting aspects of course content sections on liberal learning/Hendrix general education, student self-reflection/self-authorship, and mentoring meetings with academic advisors (details above in assessment meeting summary) were all informed by assessment data. Specifically the Self-Reflection Questionnaire was shortened and modified and the liberal learning reading was changed (Goldstein and/or Rosovsky). It was decided that direct assessment options (the rotational array) in this area should include the liberal learning/general education/self-reflection and advisor's meeting content cluster of the course, each considered in separate direct assessments or collectively.*

*READING WRITING ("Critical Reading/Effective Writing")*
*-In adding focus to the TRANSITIONS section we crowded other content areas, in particular the READING/WRITING. As we foresee keeping much of the new material in the transitions section, we need to pare down reading/writing assignments and regain depth in reading/writing activities. Specifically, the Explorations Working Group decided that for Fall, 2010 students would write only paper based on one major reading (Walls: The Glass Castle), with a revision of that paper included in the assignment.*

*ENGAGED LEARNING*
*-The oral presentation component of the ENGAGED LEARNING section needs better materials and instructions for students. Substituting an emphasis on oral communication for the reflection paper on the Explorations mini-Odyssey project is a change supported by the assessment data. The Fall, 2010 course will contain an enhanced oral presentation component. Oral communication via the Explorations Mini-Odyssey oral presentation with be the direct assessment focus of the Fall, 2010 Explorations course.*

What are the plans for improving student learning in your unit?

*The summary information noted in prior sections of this report reflect the collective discussion and actions of the Explorations Working Group relative to improving student learning in Explorations for Fall, 2010. Based on review and discussion of both direct and indirect assessment measures employed in the course, modifications have been made in all three content areas of Explorations, as noted above.*

*More generally, assessment discussions relative to the Fall, 2009 Explorations course have reinforced several ongoing "developmental opportunities" for Explorations, as follows:*

*•continue to seek ways that better facilitate and develop student self-authorship and self-reflection within the three main content and assignment areas of the course.*
*•emphasize "higher order concerns (HOC)" in all dimensions of academic and personal development addressed by the course.*
*•Continue to develop ways to emphasize and make clear to students the mentoring climate at Hendrix and its role and purpose in student ownership and self-authorship of their Hendrix educational experiences.*

*•Continue to seek to develop and place "high impact experiences" at the heart of the Explorations course—experiences understood by students to be of relevance to their success at Hendrix and valuable in their own right.*
*•Continue to seek ways to be more "transparent" in communicating to students the rationale behind the course components and assignments.*

4. Define at least one new action item for your unit that will be a goal of your assessment discussions next year?

*Action items for the Fall, 2010 Explorations course are as follows:*

*PRIMARY:*
*• Add intentionality and specificity to the oral presentation component of the ENGAGED LEARNING section (rubric, peer feedback component, etc.).*
*• Make this oral presentation the direct assessment for the Fall, 2010 course.*

*SECONDARY:*
*• Continue to work to optimize the TRANSITIONS sections of the course, especially the liberal learning reading, content of the self-reflection questionnaire, and appropriate topics for the general education "mini-paper"*

*• Continue to refine the questionnaire we use to solicit written input from Working Group members prior to the December Assessment Meeting (first distributed in December, 2008).*

*•ADD a written input component for EPAs (Explorations Peer Assistants) prior to their end-of-semester assessment meeting.*

*(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. It can (and perhaps should) be a very limited item.)*