

## Departmental and Program Assessment Annual Assessment Plan Report

Academic Year: 2009-2010

Academic Unit: Department of Religion

Chair: Jane Harris

### Assessment Plan

- Is there an assessment plan for your department, program, or general education component? (It should be on the web at <http://www.hendrix.edu/academics/academics.aspx?id=7264>. If not, provide a timeline that will produce a plan by the end of the next academic year.)
  - ❖ The department has an assessment plan that will be updated to include new courses and course numbers and will be available by June 1, 2010. The revisions will reflect the current faculty, learning goals, and curriculum of the Department of Religion
- Does the assessment plan include stated student learning goals? (Goals should be able to stand alone as a list without pages of explanatory commentary. If not, provide a timeline that will produce goals by the end of the next academic year.)
  - ❖ The revised assessment plan incorporates the learning goals that were articulated by the Religion faculty during the 2007-2009 academic year and reaffirmed during discussions during the 2008-2009 academic year.
- Does the assessment plan include a list of assessment data that are collected each year? (Assessment data lists should be able to stand alone as a list without pages of explanatory commentary. If not, provide a timeline that will produce a list by the end of the next academic year. You do **not** need to submit any of your data, but it should be on file in your department.)
  - ❖ Yes, the assessment plan identifies the data that the department will collect during each academic year.
- Has your department or program done an assessment audit of your courses to determine how course goals match overall student learning goals? (This has not been required of departments, but it is a recommended exercise. If you have done this, please report the results.)

The department has not devised a departmental instrument for assessing the courses taught in a given year with the students learning goals. Each individual faculty member supplies his or her own course goals, as stated on course syllabi, and assesses each student in individual courses with respect to individual students' achievements of the goals set for that course.

- Are student learning goals available to students? Are student learning goals included in course syllabi in your department or program?

- ❖ YES, the departmental goals are available on the college's web site. The department will seek to add the learning goals to our department's web page.

### **Student Assessments**

- Describe which *direct* assessments in your assessment plan have been collected for the year and which have not. ["Direct" refers to evaluated student work.]

- ❖ Individual faculty members keep examples of student papers, research projects, and examinations. Copies of all senior thesis papers are available for review.

- Describe which indirect assessments in your assessment plan have been collected for the year and which have not. ["Indirect" refers to student surveys or opinions.]

- ❖ With the expertise of Professor Williamson, the department conducted a survey of Religion majors, minors, and other students interested in the study of Religion. The survey is appended to this document and shows student responses to an extensive list of topics related to the requirements for the major and minor, interest in possible new course offerings, the possibilities of creating new hybrid majors, modeled on the Philosophy and Religion major but with combinations such as Religion and Anthropology, for example. The results of the survey were presented at a dinner on April 27<sup>th</sup> to which all majors and minors were invited. Students had the opportunity to elaborate upon the survey findings, offering additional insight for faculty to consider as we use the survey to plan future directions of the department.

### **Assessment Planning**

- How is information about student learning shared and used for department, program, or general education component decision making? (Each unit is to have discussions of at least two hours each academic year to discuss assessment. If you have met, briefly summarize the meeting. If you have not met, when do you plan to meet?)

- ❖ In two meetings that lasted approximately three and a half hours between April 20 and May 4, the faculty identified several areas for future discussions, which has led us to plan a two-day workshop, scheduled from 1p.m.-5 p.m. on May 24 and May 26. We are continuing to benefit from the momentum created by the survey of our students and the information and insight generated both from the survey, the dinner conversations with students about the survey, and departmental discussions.

- Describe any curricular or other programmatic changes that have been made that were based (at least in part) on the availability of your assessment data.

- ❖ As a result of conversations that began in August 2009 with the visit of the Wabash Center consultant, David Ratke, the faculty proposed to the college that the name of

our department be changed to the Department of Religious Studies. The faculty approved that change in the February 2009 faculty meeting, and the new name will become effective with the beginning of the 2010-2011 academic year. The new name better reflects the interdisciplinary character of the study of religion at Hendrix College and implies the variety of approaches and methods used by this faculty in the study of Religion. We also polled students for their responses to the name change and found them quite positive. Religious Studies offers a clearer connotation that we approach the study of the phenomenon of religion academically.

- ❖ Along with the name change, we have added a 200-level topics course, which will allow us to provide a less advanced course that may interest students who have not had prior study in the department but are interested in the particular topic at a lower level of difficulty (the only alternative was the 400-level topics course, which might frighten interested students who have not studied in the department).
  - ❖ Individual faculty members have offered name changes for courses in order better to describe the content of the courses; for example Dr. Sanders has changed the names of the courses on the history of Christianity from RELI 230 History of Christianity to 1500 to RELI 230 Early Christianity to the Reformation and RELI 231 History of Christianity since 1500 to RELI 231 Christianity in the Renaissance to the Present.
- Describe any changes in the Assessment Plan that have been made during this academic year. (If changes have been made, please submit an electronic copy of the revised plan to Amanda Hurd.)
    - ❖ The departmental assessment plan will be updated to reflect the learning goals identified in 2007-2008 and to correspond to new course numbers and faculty members.
  - What are the plans for improving student learning in your unit?
    - ❖ The faculty are striving to improve the research skills of our majors by requiring a variety of opportunities for doing research, better integrating the Theories and Methods course (RELI 395) and the Senior Colloquium course (RELI 497), with considerations for when we should teach the RELI 395 course in order to prepare our senior majors to produce a senior thesis project.
  - Report on this year's action item for your unit.
    - ❖ The department faculty participated in a one-day workshop in August 2009 that began a conversation that has continued throughout the year. As a result of the discussions, a survey taken in the spring of 2010 has provided the momentum for a two-day workshop on May 24 and May 26 during which we will continue to work on expectations for the Department of Religious Studies with respect to our service to Hendrix College students and our preparation of majors in Religious Studies for careers and additional study.

- Define at least one action item for your unit that will be a goal of your assessment discussions next year?
  - ❖ We will have better picture of the capstone experience that we want for our senior Religion majors and how to link the Theories and Research course (RELI 395) to the Senior Colloquium (RELI 497) to enhance the capstone experience.
  - ❖ We will also continue to examine our understanding of the mission of the department in serving all Hendrix students while offering a quality program for the study of Religion in the twenty-first century for those who choose to major in Religious Studies.