

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

(Based on annual Explorations Assessment/Planning meeting of December 6, 2012
and Explorations summer workshops of May, 13-14, 2013 and August 12-13, 2013)

Academic Year: 2012-2013

Co-Coordinators: Dwayne Collins; Carole Herrick (preparing to take over during this time and preparing this Annual Assessment Report co-coordinators: Ann Muse, JJ Whitney, and Jennifer Peszka)

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=47328>

YES

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.

YES

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

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

Link: <http://www.hendrix.edu/supportservices/default.aspx?id=48477>

This link available to students on three web pages accessed through the Hendrix home page:

-Current Students>The Academic Program>The Collegiate Center

-Current Students>The Academic Program>Majors, Departments, Interdisciplinary Programs>Explorations

AND

-Current Students>Academic Affairs>Academic Support Services>Explorations

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

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

Our long-range plan is that each of the topics/assignments in Explorations will receive direct assessment in a multi-year rotational pattern. Though discussion of all content areas in the past fall’s iteration of the course occurs in each of the yearly Explorations Working Group meetings (December assessment meeting, May and August workshops), the Group also focuses each year on ONE direct assessment area. Historically, a given direct assessment is adopted as the course focus for multiple years, not to exceed three, so as to more thoroughly develop that content area.

The Working Group uses Barbara Walvoord’s direct assessment model, presented in her book Assessment Clear and Simple: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education. We have found this model to be well suited for Explorations.

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.

Two indirect assessments are collected yearly in Explorations, including Fall 2012, as follows:

Explorations Student Feedback Form—Fall 2012

•Collects student opinion on all course content areas 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 course, suggestions for additions/deletions, etc.

Explorations Pre- and Post-Test Surveys—Fall 2012

•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 differences between the annual Pre- and Post-test Surveys 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 content/assignment areas contained in the course.

A summary of the data mentioned above and collected this year is appended to past years for comparisons in two spreadsheets attached to this document (2012 pre and post test comparisons.xls and 2012 student feedback comparisons.xls)

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.)

An assessment audit, as described above, is not applicable to Explorations as a stand-alone course, though an audit involving multiple courses in the Collegiate Center might be a project to consider in appropriate faculty/administrative circles. This may be particularly important upon the adoption of the Integrated Advising Proposal and the incorporation of Explorations into that program.

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?

The Explorations action plan for 2012-13 is quoted below, exactly as it appeared in the 2011-12 Explorations Assessment Report.

The action item for the Fall 2012 Explorations course is as follows:

- *Continue for another year (Fall 2012) our work to optimize the learning value of the oral communication component of the ENGAGED LEARNING section of Explorations.*
- *Continue for another year (Fall 2012) our direct assessment of the oral communication component of the Mini-Odyssey assignment in Explorations. We need an additional year to capitalize on the oral presentation assessment feedback that came from the Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 courses. Specifically, work will be undertaken to change/enhance the planning sheet to more fully reflect our priorities relative to student planning and preparation of the oral presentation. That assignment and planning sheet will also reinforce the centrality of Higher Order Concerns (HOC) to both written and oral communication at Hendrix.*

Additionally, the Explorations Working Group anticipates significant changes in the Explorations course if the faculty endorses the Integrated Advising Proposal in a vote scheduled for September, 2013. Should that endorsement occur, Working Group meetings in December, 2013 and in the May, 2013 and August, 2013 Explorations summer workshops will involve reconfiguring the Explorations course along lines conducive to support of the enhanced advising program outlined in the Integrated Advising Proposal. In that case, direct and indirect assessment of Explorations will shift along with course content.

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 6, 2012 Annual Assessment Meeting and May 13-14, 2013/August 12-13, 2013 summer workshop assessment sessions relating to the Fall 2012 Explorations course included discussions on the action items quoted in Question 1 above and more general assessment discussions of the three main content areas of the course: Transitions, Reading/Writing, and Engaged Learning. Highlights of these assessment discussions are summarized below.

NOTE: The direct assessment process employed by Explorations faculty each year uses the method presented by Barbara Walvoord in her respected ASSESSMENT CLEAR AND SIMPLE: A Practical Guide for Institutions, Departments, and General Education (Jossey-Bass, 2004). This model has enabled us to identify and address a significant number of content and pedagogy issues in Explorations over the years.

Action Item #1 & #2

#1 Continue for another year (Fall 2012) our work to optimize the learning value of the oral communication component of the ENGAGED LEARNING section of Explorations.

#2 Continue for another year (Fall 2012) our direct assessment of the oral communication component of the Mini-Odyssey assignment in Explorations. We need an additional year to capitalize on the oral presentation assessment feedback that came from the Fall 2010 and Fall 2011 courses. Specifically, work will be undertaken to change/enhance the planning sheet to more fully reflect our priorities relative to student planning and preparation of the oral presentation. That assignment and planning sheet will also reinforce the centrality of Higher Order Concerns (HOC) to both written and oral communication at Hendrix.

The Explorations ILO tied to Action item #1 and 2 for 2012-13 reads as follows:

The student exhibits an understanding of the importance of her or his ability to communicate both orally and in written form as well as gather and process information and knowledge at a level of sophistication necessary for a successful Hendrix experience (ILO 2-1).

The direct assessment for the Fall 2012 Explorations course was, for the third consecutive year, focused on the oral presentation component for the Engaged Learning project. The Fall 2012 changes/enhancements incorporated into the assignment--based on Fall 2011 direct assessment feedback--were reported by section teachers during the December assessment meeting orally as well as in the Instructor Course Evaluation. These changes included a reworking of the planning sheet for the assignment, shifting the primary focus to preparation and presentation skills rather than content and also further emphasizing Higher Order Skills (HOC). Too, the Working Group agreed to highlight in Fall 2012 class discussions the commonalities in the planning sheets for the oral presentation and the written HeLa paper for Fall 2012.

Most of the course instructors responded positively to the changes in the presentation. The planning sheet was well received with the changes and instructors thought it helped reduce student procrastination and helped provide feedback on the work before they gave the actual presentation. However, a number of instructors still felt that it was difficult to get students to take such a short presentation (3-4 minutes) seriously.

Despite the improvements in the activity and the recognized value of the activity by the Working Group; the Working Group has been asked to eliminate the Mini-Odyssey project from the curriculum for Explorations for the Fall 2013 semester. This is in response to the development of The Engaged Citizen course which will have each freshman engage in a hands on learning experience. The Mini-Odyssey was the content for the oral presentations in the course. There was discussion by the instructors during the assessment meeting and workshops that we might find other content for the basis of oral presentations and some instructors will have students give oral presentations on the Odyssey Program itself. We will examine the effectiveness of these pilot oral presentations during the December 2013 assessment meeting.

Action Item #3

Additionally, the Explorations Working Group anticipates significant changes in the Explorations course if the faculty endorses the Integrated Advising Proposal in a vote scheduled for September, 2013. Should that endorsement occur, Working Group meetings in December, 2013 and in the May, 2013 and August, 2013 Explorations summer workshops will involve reconfiguring the Explorations course along lines conducive to support of the enhanced advising program outlined in the Integrated Advising Proposal. In that case, direct and indirect assessment of Explorations will shift along with course content.

The Working Group made a number of changes to the course that will be taught in Fall 2013 in response to assessment data from the Fall 2012 and two developments at The College: 1) the initiation of The Engaged Citizen course and 2) the impending adoption of an Integrated Advising Proposal. As mentioned earlier, The Engaged Citizen course working group indicated that their group would cover two of the content areas that Explorations had usually covered: 1) engaged learning, and 2) development of analytical writing skills. In response to these two losses of content area, the Working Group decided to continue to introduce the Odyssey project to first year students, in particular the Learning Goals of the Odyssey Program, but without the implementation of the Mini-Odyssey projects and the corresponding oral presentation component. Additionally, the focus of the writing component of the Explorations course would focus on “reflective” rather than “analytical” writing. In response to the impending adoption of an Integrated Advising Proposal, the Working Group agreed to have two writing assignments that focused on advising issues. One writing assignment would help students explore one’s talents in seeking a vocation; the second assignment would help students think about their future courses as a means of seeking a vocation. The Working Group also decided to shift their assessment focus from oral presentations (the topic for the past 3 years) to the General Education component of the course. A direct assessment pre- and post- test will be implemented to assess student knowledge of The College’s general education requirements both before and after their undertaking the Explorations course work for the Fall 2013. This shift in assessment will allow for direct assessment of ILO 1-2 (see below). Finally a “Balance Day” was added to the Explorations curriculum to help students focus on the way they spend their time and further meeting ILO 1-1 (see below).

Goal 1: Through its content and context, Explorations seeks to make each student aware of the importance of many of the academic, personal, and social contexts that are needed for a successful transition to Hendrix, and seeks to facilitate each student's transition.

ILO 1-1: The student exhibits an understanding of the perspectives, processes, habits of mind, and personal choices conducive to a successful transition as well as a progressive understanding of the importance of these attributes.

ILO 1-2: The student exhibits an understanding of the traditional and experiential components of the academic program of the College as well as the available student resources, mentoring and support systems in place to facilitate a successful experience at Hendrix.

Other Assessment Issues:

Transitions: The Working Group agreed that the liberal learning readings continued to be effective enough to be retained for Fall 2013, though we still haven't found the "magic" reading(s) through which Explorations students can engage these concepts. Sharing various pedagogical approaches to this material in summer workshops has been helpful, and may profit from being formalized at some point. In response to these assessment findings, instructors were invited to add readings that they found in addition to the common readings presented by the group annually for the Fall 2013 course. Assessment of the effectiveness of these additional readings will be discussed in the December 2013 assessment meeting.

During the summer workshops of 2013, the Transitions working group developed an interactive social ethics activity that will hopefully strengthen the effectiveness of the "Social Conduct" day in the course. This component has received consistently lower marks in the indirect assessment from students for effectiveness.

Reading and Writing:

In response to indirect assessment from both instructors and students, the planning document for the major writing assignment will be discontinued in the Fall 2013 course. Additionally, as mentioned above there will be a shift in the reading and writing component of the Fall 2013 course. The focus of the writing component of the Explorations course will be on "reflective" rather than "analytical" writing. In response to the impending adoption of an Integrated Advising Proposal, the Working Group agreed to have two writing assignments that focused on advising issues. One writing assignment would help students explore one's talents in seeking a vocation; the second assignment would help students think about their future courses as a means of seeking a vocation.

Engaged Learning:

Again, as mentioned earlier, the Mini-Odyssey project will be dropped from the Fall 2013 course in response to the initiation of The Engaged Citizen Course. The Working Group agreed to refocus attention to an introduction to the Odyssey Program and the Learning Goals of the Odyssey Program to replace this component in Fall 2013.

Exploration Peer Mentors:

The 2011 assessment report read as follows: *•Explorations Coordinators need to rethink past efforts to secure EPA feedback on the course. Response to the written assessment form we distributed in Fall, 2010 and Fall 2011 was virtually non-existent. Lunches we held from Fall, 2007-Fall 2009 for informal feedback time drew only 1-3 EPA.*

For the Fall 2013 course, EPAs will be asked to give their course feedback online and will be invited to a luncheon at the end of the Fall semester to give their assessment feedback.

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 conclusions of the Explorations Assessment Meeting of December 6, 2012 and the follow-up assessment discussions in the May 13-14, 2013 and August 12-13, 2013 workshops leading up to the Fall 2013 Explorations course all owe in large measure to assessment data collected for the Fall 2012 iteration of the course and the two changes at the College (the initiation of The Engaged Citizen, and the proposed initiation of an Integrated Advising Program) mentioned earlier. All of the assessment based changes are described in the previous section. What follows is a summarized listing of the changes described above to be made to the course for Fall 2013.

- 1) Deletion of the Mini-Odyssey and corresponding Oral Presentation component of the course
- 2) Refocusing of the Engaged Learning component of the course to an introduction to the Odyssey Program along with the Learning Goals of the Odyssey Program with voluntary oral presentations for this component
- 3) A shift in focus for the writing component of the course from “analytical” to “reflective” writing
- 4) A shift in focus for both the reading and writing components to vocation related issues
- 5) The addition of a direct assessment for the General Education component of the course
- 6) The addition of a “Balance Day”
- 7) Voluntary additional readings to the common readings presented by the group annually for an introduction to Liberal Arts.
- 8) A new interactive social ethics activity for an introduction to Social Conduct expectations.
- 9) Deletion of the planning document for the major writing assignment
- 10) Addition of online EPA feedback form and EPA assessment luncheon

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

The summary information noted in prior sections of this report reflects the efforts of the Explorations Working Group to improve student learning in Explorations for Fall 2013 based on direct and indirect assessment of the Fall 2012 course. Further, the Working Group continues its commitment to the following goals:

- Continue to seek ways that promote student self-authorship and self-reflection through the three main content areas of the course (Transitions, Reading/Writing, Engaged Learning).
- Continue to seek ways to 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 the role of that climate in supporting student ownership and self-authorship of their Hendrix education.
- 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 Explorations course content.
- Enhancement of EPA feedback on the course. Response to the written assessment form we distributed in the past draws feedback from 1-3 EPAs annually.

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

The action items for the Fall 2013 Explorations course are as follows:

•In light of the Integrated Advising Proposal the Explorations Working Group anticipates significant changes in the Explorations course. Working Group meetings in December 2013, May 2014, and August 2014 will involve reconfiguring the Explorations course to support the enhanced advising program as outlined in the proposal.

•Additionally, we will shift our assessment focus from oral communication which is complete to assessment of the General Education component of the Explorations course. We will add a direct assessment of the General Education knowledge of students by adding a pre and post test of the general education requirements to the general pre and post test given on the first and last

days of the course. We will have indirect assessment of this component of the course by collecting instructor feedback through the annual instructor feedback mechanism as well as the student feedback forms completed on the final day of the course.

(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.)