

Explorations Assessment Report – 2017-2018 Academic Year

The Fall semester of 2017 was the third year under the new model where Explorations was tied more closely to CNSA. Whenever possible, each section would be taught by the advisor. After two years of mostly positive feedback from students and instructors, only minor changes were implemented. The results from both from formal faculty & student evaluations and anecdotal evidence indicate that this year was a success.

Numbers:

- 28 sections total, average of 12 students/ section
 - 22 taught by CNSA
 - 2 taught by non-advising faculty members
 - 3 taught by staff
- 8/28 (29%) instructors had no previous experience with Explorations
- Instructors come from the following areas:
 - Humanities – 13 (Departments include Languages, Religious Studies, Art, Music)
 - Natural Science – 7 (Mathematics & Computer Science, Chemistry, Biology)
 - Social Science – 4 (History, Sociology/Anthropolgy, Economics & Business)
 - Staff - 3 (Academic Success, Athletics)
 - Library Faculty – 1

These numbers are similar to many years – Humanities nearly always has approximately half of the instructors. However, the Working Group is pleased to notice the increase in both raw numbers and departments represented from the Natural Sciences. In addition, we seem to have acquired a “stable” of reliable instructors who are willing to teach either every year or every time that they are appointed to CNSA. The instructor numbers for Explorations are more than sustainable, and we expect that over the next few years, we will maintain a high proportion of CNSA-ers teaching their advisees.

Discussion:

There were no substantive curricular changes in Explorations between the Fall of 2016 and the Fall of 2017. Instead, the Working Group implemented a round of new learning goals for the course that better fit the new direction. Those goals are:

1. To assist first year students in making a successful transition to academic and student life at Hendrix.
2. To assist first year students in developing their capacity to reflect critically on their values, interests, and abilities as related to academic and student life at Hendrix.

In addition, question #5 on the student feedback form was replaced. Previously, it read “Explorations has helped me reflect on what is involved in vocational discernment (i.e.

thinking about what I'm going to do after college) and selecting a major.” The Working Group was concerned that this question really combined two different ideas – vocational discernment & selecting a major – and thereby might lead to confusion for the students. For Fall 2017, we split this question into two parts:

- Explorations has provided me with tools and resources that I can use to consider my talents and interests and then relate to future career and vocational exploration.
- Explorations has helped me reflect on what is involved in selecting a major.

Though both questions had a (slightly) higher score on student evaluations than the single question in 2016, they were the lowest two ratings given. The comments – though few in numbers--do indicate that more emphasis should be spent on these topics.

As mentioned in previous years, we still find it difficult to pace the middle of the course. With no class during the 4th week advisor check-in, a full class period devoted to meeting with the Dean of Students, and Fall Break, the momentum built up in the beginning of the semester still flags by mid-semester. In 2017-2018, instructor evaluations did not note this as strongly as before, though perhaps that is influenced by the larger proportion of advisors teaching their own sections. For the upcoming 2018 year, the Working Group is having the EPA lead a session of the class during the 4th week – this still gives the instructor some time away to balance (if they are the advisor) the time required for meeting individually with their students, but also hopefully keeps some cohesion with the students themselves, as well as between them and their EPA.

Course Evaluations:

Each section of the course gives a common evaluation to its students. Quantitative questions are scored on a 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree scale. A summary page is attached, which compares each question to the previous year, as well as the full report, with anonymized comments. Fall 2017 was the first year that evaluations were conducted online, so that overall participation was not as high as in previous years, when evaluations were completed during class time. In general, the quantitative numbers are slightly below that of Fall 2016, though not significantly so. We will continue to watch to determine if there is a long-term downward trend. Scores for the 2016 version of the class are also shown for comparison purposes.

Question	Fall 2017	Fall 2016
1. Explorations has increased my understanding about how to navigate the Hendrix experience.	4.14	4.13
2. Explorations has increased my understanding of Hendrix's general education requirements.	4.36	4.53
3. Explorations has increased my awareness of the resources available on campus.	4.19	4.25
4. Explorations has helped me to understand what is expected of a Hendrix student, both inside and outside the classroom.	4.05	4.21

5 Explorations has provided me with tools and resources that I can use to consider my talents and interests and then relate to future career and vocational goals *	3.91	3.69*
6. Explorations has helped me reflect on what is involved in selecting a major *	3.85	3.69*
7. Approximately how many times outside of class did you meet (formally or informally) with your Explorations instructor?	3.29	1.95
11. % of students who indicate they have found a Mentor on Campus	73%	80%
12. % of students who consider their Explorations Instructor a Mentor.	73%	75%

**Note for #5 & 6: In the 2016 version, these two questions were combined into a single question asking “Explorations has helped me reflect on what is involved in vocational discernment (i.e. thinking about what I’m going to do after college) and selecting a major.” The Working Group elected to split these to better understand if there was a significant difference between career and vocation and selecting a major.

Conclusion:

Overall, Explorations 2017 was a success. Work remains to be done on determining the pacing of the course, and smoothing out the topics of career & vocation and selecting a major.