

## Odyssey Program 2017-18 Annual Assessment Report

Assessment of the Odyssey Program continues under the leadership of the Associate Provost for Engaged Learning and the Director of the Odyssey Program. There are several sources of assessment data, including a significant revision to two of them – the graduate outcomes survey and the Young Alumni Survey.

### *Graduate Outcomes Survey and Young Alumni Survey*

Since 2012, the Hendrix survey of all graduating students had included a question regarding Odyssey. This question focused on the second learning goal – vocational discovery. After Odyssey’s entirely falling off of the survey in 2017, we worked with the Director of Institutional Research to add a new set of questions that touched more of the program’s learning goals. Here are these questions and the spread of responses:

<b>One or more of my Odyssey experiences helped me to...</b>					
	(1) Strongly Disagree	(2) Disagree	(3) Agree	(4) Strongly Agree	Average
Plan my professional life after graduation.	19 (8%)	45 (18%)	101 (41%)	83 (33%)	3.00
Set my personal educational goals and make a plan for realizing them.	14 (6%)	38 (15%)	112 (45%)	83 (34%)	3.07
Think about how my values and beliefs influence my actions and goals.	17 (7%)	37 (15%)	103 (41%)	92 (37%)	3.08
Examine ideas in new contexts and apply theories to practice.	14 (6%)	23 (9%)	118 (47%)	94 (38%)	3.17

While we should see this initial year data as a baseline for our ongoing assessment of the program, this quantitative data is quite positive overall, showing that at least three-quarters of all seniors either “agree” or “strongly agree” that the program succeeded in achieving its four learning goals. Particularly strong was the linkage of the classroom experiences to the world beyond with 85% of respondents providing favorable responses on this learning goal.

This survey of graduating seniors also included an opportunity for respondents to provide feedback regarding the Odyssey program. A wide range of responses are shown in this qualitative data. At one end of the spectrum, students report that the program was key to their initial decision to come to Hendrix and that the program lived up to its billing for them while on campus. Others express frustrations about their

inability to gain funding for projects that they proposed. Other students note that the Odyssey requirements added little to their time at Hendrix.

These new questions will also serve as the foundation for the Young Alumni Survey that the Office of Institutional Research plans to carry out in the coming months. This replaces a previous set of questions regarding Odyssey on that survey and will serve as a new baseline for that key determinant of the program's success

### *Senior Dinners*

As has taken place since 2013, in spring the Associate Provost for Engaged Learning and the Director of Odyssey continued the practice of conversations over dinner by sets of seniors to ascertain how well the established learning goals are being met by students. Random sampling was used to invite graduating seniors to the catered meals. At each dinner, the students were broken into groups of approximately ten students. Faculty pairs facilitated discussion by asking probing questions related to the learning goals. Importantly, faculty facilitators—who were trained before the dinners—did not simply list learning goals and ask if the students achieved them. Rather, the facilitators asked open-ended questions inviting students to describe what they gained from their Odyssey experiences and from the challenge of the requirement to earn three credits from three different categories.

The faculty pairings for 2018 were:

- A) Jane Harris and Jonathan Hancock
- B) Allison Shutt and Joyce Hardin
- C) Sasha Pfau and Mark Goadrich
- D) Michael Sprunger and Kiril Kolev

Shortly after the senior dinners, each faculty pair met to share notes, and to best judge the extent to which students in their group, on average, evidenced achievement of the learning goals. They employed a rubric (see Appendix A) to evaluate and discuss learning goal achievement. What follows is a visual representation of this assessment by the faculty pairs; the placement of the letters A through D correspond to the groups/dinners listed above.

**Goal 1: Enhancement of learning (both what they know and how they come to know)**

	No Evidence (no student's comments revealed the exercise of this capacity)	Evident (some students' comments revealed the exercise of this capacity)	Very Evident (a preponderance of students' comments revealed the exercise of this capacity)
examination of ideas in new contexts		AB	CD
application of theories to practice	B	AC	D
first-hand discovery of how things are in the world			ABCD
exercise of, and reflection upon, powers of judgment in practical situations		CD	AB

As one can see, outside of the consistently positive results for one component ("first-hand discovery of how things are in the world"), there is some spread in achievement of Goal 1.

**Goal 2: Vocational Self-Discovery and Professional Development**

	No Evidence (no student's comments revealed the exercise of this capacity)	Evident (some students' comments revealed exercise of this capacity)	Very Evident (a preponderance of students' comments revealed the exercise of this capacity )
discovery of qualities and capacities they possess for acting effectively in the world		A	BCD
exercise of resourcefulness and problem-solving abilities in new and complex situations		BC	AD
identification and exploration of vocational and a- vocational passions			ABCD
reflective delineation of values, life plans, graduation and career goals in light of hands- on experience			ABCD

Goal 2 was the learning goal expressed most fully in the senior dinner discussions, as had been the case in past years. Importantly, students are tapping into Odyssey to help

clarify how they spend time at Hendrix (educational and co-educational pursuits) as well as future directions, whether it is employment, graduate education, or community engagement. In many cases, students learn from mistakes or learn what they do not want to do post-graduation. Likewise, students are clearly developing skills beyond what they can do in the classroom, such as confidence, problem-solving, independence and passion. This shows that we can legitimately connect the Odyssey program to career outcomes in our discussion of the program with external constituencies.

### **Goal 3: Development of a Sense of Ownership over One's Educational Pursuits and of the Habits Conducive to Life-Long Learning**

	No Evidence (no student's comments revealed the exercise of this capacity)	Evident (some students' comments revealed exercise of this capacity)	Very Evident (a preponderance of students' comments revealed the exercise of this capacity )
independently structuring educational projects in accordance with self- selected learning goals		AB	CD
applying previous learning to new contexts in creative and novel ways	B	A	CD
discovering unforeseen connections between disciplines, schools of thought, or social practices	BD	C	A
learning from critical reflection upon both success and failure			ABCD

The results on this goal look much like Goal 1. There is overwhelming evidence of the power of reflection in the program. Indeed, we regularly call reflection the “secret sauce” of the Odyssey program that separates it from other engaged learning program. Otherwise, there is more diversity of outcomes on this learning goal.

**Goal 4: Increased Awareness of One's Responsibility for Linking Action and Understanding in the Effort to Respond Effectively to the Social, Spiritual, and Ecological Needs of our Time**

	No Evidence (no student's comments revealed the exercise of this capacity)	Evident (some students' revealed required the exercise of this capacity)	Very Evident (a preponderance of students' comments revealed the exercise of this capacity )
discovering one's capacity to explore the world and act as an effective agent within it		A	BCD
becoming reflective and articulate about how one's values and beliefs influence one's actions and actions shape and reveal one's values and beliefs		ABCD	
gaining exposure to, and critically reflecting upon, previously unfamiliar avenues of response to intellectual queries and social problems		BD	AC
making conscious decisions in the selection or design of hands on projects responsive to local and/or global communities		A	BCD

In past years, Goal 4 was the least developed in the discussions with the graduating seniors. There seems to have been good work to improve outcomes in this area although it remains an area for some additional improvement.

The process of facilitating senior dinners and applying the rubric provides an important development opportunity for the faculty members involved. Many participants value the opportunity to think more deeply about the goals of the Program, as well as how to more deeply engage the students they advise.

*Odyssey Exemplars*

The Odyssey Office continues to program the Exemplar series, which has students present their interesting and outstanding projects to the Hendrix community. At this

point, we are no longer formally assessing these events with the rubric that was developed for them several years ago. The key reasons for our moving away from assessing these events is because of the tremendous variance in the faculty/staff members who attend the presentations and because they only reflect a single Odyssey experience rather than the totality of Odyssey experiences, which is the focus of our assessment of student learning regarding Odyssey.

### *Odyssey Distinction*

While the Distinction in Odyssey program was not originally envisioned as a component of our assessment program, having had the opportunity to visit with those students who have so fully immersed in the program made us realize that these interviews do provide a way for us to understand our best students' ability to achieve the learning goals of the program. We were genuinely wowed by the articulation of the learning goals of the program, typically with almost no prodding. Based on the conversations with the Director and Associate Director of the program, there was no doubt that the 14 students who had completed (or would soon complete) experiences in the six Odyssey categories were distinctive in their Odyssey work. Thus, this means that the program is a transformative experience for those students who take full advantage of it.

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