

## **The Engaged Citizen Assessment Meeting: Conversation guide**

Please fill out this report based on your department's conversation and return via e-mail to Megan Leonard or Sasha Pfau by May 31, 2017.

### **Summary of past decisions**

Please summarize up to three changes made since the last HLC visit (08-09) the impetus for those changes and any changes to information gathering about student development.

TEC was created in the time since 08-09, in response to faculty consideration of goals for students. Through a series of faculty meetings devoted to establishing shared parameters for a freshman course and consideration of options for meeting those goals, TEC emerged as a common course.

The Engaged Citizen (TEC) course was first taught in the fall of 2013 after a year of planning from a small cohort of faculty called the TEC Working Group. A major component of that planning work was developing a robust assessment plan for the course that would be used by the working group and the Hendrix faculty, in general, to inform decision-making. The assessment plan targets the four learning goals for the course:

1. The ability to comprehend and appreciate a set of complex issues relevant to being engaged citizens.
2. The ability to make connections between the evidence and methods from two distinct disciplines in order to formulate arguments about engaged citizenship.
3. The ability to express those arguments clearly in writing and discussion.
4. The ability to engage in and reflect on experiential learning that connects directly to the classroom experience, preparing the students for vibrant Odyssey experiences later in their Hendrix careers.

We assess student learning indirectly and directly. End-of-course student evaluations have components that assess instructor teaching and a component, common to all sections of TEC, that indirectly assesses student outcomes. The common piece has 14 Likert-scale questions, three open-response questions, and an additional comments section. Each open response question and 11 of the 14 Likert-scale questions are mapped onto the learning goals for the course. Except for some small wording replacements made between the first and second years of the course, the indirect assessment of the course has remained unchanged.

Co-instructors in each section of TEC also directly assess student learning. Through a rubric-based assessment that connects each learning goal to Hendrix's Statement of Purpose and Vision for Student Learning, together instructors assess what fraction of their students did not meet the learning goals for the course, did but still need improvement, or did in a competent or high achieving manner. Except for edits in wording to reflect the changes to our Statement of Purpose and our Vision for Student Learning, the direct assessment has remained unchanged.

### **Looking forward**

Please summarize your program's focus for student development and your evaluation methods.

Through Jay Barth, whose many titles include Director of Civic Engagement and ex-officio member of the TEC Working Group, we have used Project Pericles to strengthen our general assessment and our training of instructors. A Project Pericles grant funded extra training in 2015 for TEC instructors who were interested in partnering with community organizations. And a recent assessment of student across several Project Pericles schools should give us an idea of whether or not TEC is helping to highlight among our students elements of Engaged Citizenship in their education. These projects depend on external grants, and are therefore not consistent from year to year.

Internal cuts to our budget over the last three years have also impacted the ways we can work with faculty to improve student learning. In particular, we have had to dramatically reduce the number of workshops we offer faculty who are preparing to teach TEC. Though there may be a small decline in student assessment of our first learning goal, we are relieved that assessments largely seem consistent after changes to our workshop calendar.

This spring the college graduated the first students who took TEC as their first-year seminar. As we look toward the future, the TEC Working Group is particularly interested whether TEC has changed students' perspectives on what it means to live as an engaged citizen over their four years. Over the next year we would like to develop a plan to address this question. We believed that NSSE results and the senior survey done by the college would be particularly helpful in assessing this effect.

### **Achieving TEC learning goals for students**

Please explain how TEC achieves its student learning goals across the disparate sections of the course.

The indirect and direct assessment of student learning are consistent with one another on a year-to-year basis. Generally, TEC does very well on assessments of the second learning goal – connections across disciplines. Assessment of the first and fourth learning goals – connections to engaged citizenship and connections to the Odyssey program – showed remarkable improvement between the first and second years of the course but have flattened out since. Assessments of the third learning goal – expression of arguments – have revealed varying success from year to year.

The TEC Working Group uses the indirect and direct assessments along with faculty feedback to design workshops meant to improve student learning in TEC. These have included an increased emphasis on engaged citizenship and on connecting the engaged learning component to the themes of the course. Furthermore, we have changed our workshops on writing to highlight professors who did very well on the expression learning goal. We have asked those instructors to share practical ways they brought out student success and to facilitate discussions with other TEC faculty on strategies for student learning.

### **Your program's role in achieving the college's shared goals for students**

Please explain how your learning goals contribute to the Vision for Student Learning Goals. Feel free to attach a map or other supporting documents.

The work by the Assessment Committee aligns our learning goals with the VSL perfectly.