2020 Assessment of Learning Goal 2

May 29, 2020

Overview

This report summarizes the assessment of The Odyssey Program Learning Goal 2, which is the following:

Upon successful completion of the requirement for the Odyssey graduation requirement, students will be able to:

Engage in Vocational Self-Discovery and Professional Development through:
- *the discovery of qualities and capacities they possess for acting effectively in the world,*
- *the exercise of resourcefulness and problem-solving abilities in new and complex situations,*
- *the identification and exploration of vocational and a-vocational passions,*
- *the reflective delineation of values, life plans, graduation and career goals in light of hands-on experience.*

Two instruments were used to make the assessment

- Odyssey senior dinners: This assessment activity includes faculty-led conversations with graduating seniors that follow a discussion guide (Appendix A) and a follow-up direct assessment of learning goals using a rubric (Appendix B). On March 11, six faculty members were divided into pairs (one discussion leader and one note-taker) and interviewed 15 students that had volunteered to participate after a campus-wide recruiting announcement.
- Odyssey distinction application: This assessment tool asks graduating seniors eligible for distinction to elaborate on their experience with the program. Instead of in-person unstructured interviews, this year we shifted to short-answers submitted online (Appendix C). In particular, we analyzed responses to Questions 6 and 8 that relate directly to Learning Goal 2.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, two other assessment tools were not available to our office by the deadline for this report. This included the Odyssey-specific questions on the general senior exit survey, as well as the young alumni survey.

Summary of Results: Odyssey Senior Dinners

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)
A. discovery of qualities and capacities they possess for acting effectively in the world	0	1	2
B. exercise of resourcefulness and problem-solving abilities in new and complex situations	0	2	1
C. identification and exploration of vocational and a-vocational passions	0	0	3
D. reflective delineation of values, life plans, graduation and career goals in light of hands-on experience	0	0	3

The table above summarizes the Goal 2 rubric responses from the three pairs of faculty. It is encouraging to see that none of the three focus groups exhibited no evidence of a particular subcategory of the overarching learning goal and two received only the highest possible attainment score. The qualitative feedback we received from the discussion leaders was the following:

- Subcategory A: One group was rated as "evident" as a result of limited evidence that students have engaged in discovery of qualities and capacities. Instead, they discussed developing confidence in capacities they had already identified.
- Subcategory B: Two groups were rated as "evident". The faculty indicated that not all students found the situations they were placed in complex or challenging beyond what they expected.
- Subcategory C: This item received the highest possible score in all groups. Students readily discussed how their Odyssey projects helped them refine or change vocational pursuits; they also identified qualities they wanted in a vocation. In addition, students demonstrated that they learned from both positive and negative examples.
- Subcategory D: This item received the highest possible score in all groups and demonstrated very strong ties between their Odyssey experiences and future ties.

Summary of Results: Odyssey Distinction Application

Eighteen seniors applied to graduate with distinction in Odyssey using the online short-responses form. For the purpose of assessing Learning Goal 2, we looked at their responses to two questions.

Question 6: Looking back on the credits you have completed, which Odyssey learning goal was most relevant for you and why?
Ten of the eighteen respondents identified Learning Goal 2 as the one that was most relevant for them, either by itself or in combination with another goal of the Program. The responses contain some rich qualitative information and some excerpts from the student responses are worth mentioning:

- A student mentioned that the combination of an SP and PL credit really helped her discern her post-graduate vocation plans. She volunteered at a medical facility for elderly citizens with physical disabilities first. What started out as a service project gave her motivation and drive to pursue a medical career, led to her adjusting her academic pursuits, and eventually got solidified after a medical internship.
- Another student thought that an internship at UAMS would be the most appropriate engaged learning opportunity given his plans to become a medical professional. While the ability to ask questions and interact with medical students was indeed helpful, he found that leadership skills were just as important. A combination of a trip abroad to Madrid for GA credit and serving as the leader of an on-campus organization helped improve this aspect of his preparation to become a biomedical researcher in the future.
- Another student made a more abrupt shift from aspiring to be a lawyer to pursuing a career in clinical neuropsychology after interning at the Faulkner County Juvenile Court for a PL credit and later working in a Psychology lab for UR credit.
- Another student who seemed to have retained her initial career interest in film-making throughout her time at Hendrix talked about the value of doing multiple projects under the same category as a tool for continued skills development.
- A student who struggled to identify a career path during the first two years of college found the reflection component associated with his PL internship project to be really instrumental in identifying his career after graduation.

Question 8: How do you anticipate your Odyssey experiences to guide your professional and personal life beyond Hendrix?
All eighteen students elaborated on the many ways in which Odyssey experiences informed their professional plans after graduation. There are several themes that emerge:

- Developing narrower practical skills that are not that often emphasized in the classroom;
- Reconciling and differentiating between a job, a vocation, and a calling. A student elaborated on the initial uneasiness that came about when she considered the need to made a living versus her overarching desire to help people. The ability to engage in different projects and Odyssey categories helped her reconcile the two.
- Exploring career and non-career interests via different categories helped students see the need to have a balance between jobs and hobbies later in life.

- Odyssey experiences that were initially motivated by the need to find a job after graduation demonstrated the need to develop broader skills (planning, problem-solving, decision-making, constant studying, communication and leadership).
- Practicing ways to operate in a social and professional setting was highlighted by several students, some of whom self-identified as fairly reserved and introverted.

Assessment Evaluation and Future Plans

Based on the evidence summarized above, it appears that the program does a good job at meeting Learning Goal 2. Our confidence is further strengthened by the recent introduction of Career Term and its coding as a Special Projects Odyssey credit. This allows students to brainstorm about vocational self-discovery and professional development early on in their undergraduate careers and adds an element of intentionality and structure that we believe is helpful.

We also spent some time discussing the current assessment tools. Partially as a result of the COVID-19 emergency, we did not get access to the young alumni survey results. They could add some nuance in understanding whether what appears as a good achievement at the end of our students' collegiate careers translates into meaningful professional experiences several years after graduation.

More broadly, our current assessment instruments provide rich anecdotal information that is not fully systematic, representative, and generalizable. Our greatest area of concern is the strong self-selection effect that occurs among our student responders. We tend to rely on responses from seniors, and only the ones that are typically among the most engaged and motivated when it comes to Odyssey. In addition, the more systematic information collected in the campus-wide senior exit survey contains only a single question about Odyssey that does not allow us to differentiate among the different learning goals even when available.

Unfortunately, we expect another extraordinary semester in the Fall that will inevitably demand our attention to be directed to addressing the changing reality that students and faculty face and what that means for our engaged learning program. That being said, if time and resources permit it, we have discussed designing and implementing two new assessment instruments. First, we would like to field a <u>survey to students</u> that assesses their views of the program's strengths and weaknesses in a broader effort towards reform. We also plan to ask questions that get at the learning goals and whether they are being met as well. Second, we are considering requiring the addition of <u>program-and category-specific questions</u> to student evaluations for Odyssey-coded courses.

Appendix A: Discussion Guide for Senior Dinners

DISCUSION GUIDE
Guide the conversation so that students talk about what they are taking away from their Odyssey experiences. Try to let *them* name the benefits and outcomes as they tell about their experiences. Avoid directly asking "Did you get X out of Odyssey?" until at the end. If towards the end, nothing has been said that is relevant to a particular learning goal, then it is time to find out if that's just because the conversation did not bring it out yet or because no one feels that learning goal speaks to her or his experience.

I suggest something like the following flow to the conversation:

I.   <u>Introduce the purpose of the gathering—that it is to find out what they have gained from their Odyssey experiences.</u> It is not to evaluate them or their projects. It's not even to evaluate how the Odyssey office or application process works. Be happy to take note of complaints in this area and share them with us. But please keep the conversation focused as much as possible in the takeaways, the learning outcomes, since the point of the dinner is to find out how well we are meeting the Odyssey Learning Goals.

II.   <u>Beginning the Discussion: Get them telling their stories</u>.
   - What was your favorite Odyssey experience(s) and <u>what made it a good experience</u>?
   OR MAYBE
   - What was your most transformative Odyssey Experience <u>and why</u>?
   OR MAYBE
   - What was your most engaging Odyssey Experience <u>and why</u>?

I find that in describing the experience, they inevitably begin naming what they "got from" the experience.

III.   <u>Unpacking initial comments--</u> They will probably begin with great generalities: it was life-changing; it gave me a whole new perspective on things. Those of course are outcomes, but we sure would like them to be more specific. Guide them into unearthing what's behind these general descriptions *and* how the experience led to that outcome.

IV.   Other <u>suggested</u> potentially helpful questions:
   - Did any of you have Odyssey experiences that did not go well? Did you learn anything from them anyway?

   - What was the value for you in having 3 Odyssey experiences required? (This moves the discussion away from their takeaways from individual projects to their takeaways from the requirement as a whole.)

- What connection is there between any of your Odyssey experiences and what you plan to do after graduation?

- Were there any particularly helpful elements to Odyssey projects? E.g.—having to write for funding; the time spent with a professor; having to take care of myself; journal writing. (This question begins to move into assessing Odyssey processes, but it can unearth some helpful information about what makes Odyssey work when it works).

V.   Leading questions about learning goals that have not been touched on.

VI.   Close with cheery thank-yous and best wishes.

VII.   Decide on a plan between the two of you regarding getting the notes turned in and completing the Assessment Rubrics.

Appendix B: Odyssey Senior Dinner Assessment Rubrics

Student(s): _____Senior Dinners_____ Assessor(s):
_____

Number of Students Present: _____   Date:
_____

Please check the box that best indicates the extent to which the group's discussion gave evidence that their Odyssey experiences involved the exercise of the capacities named in the far left column.

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			to vocational discovery
Comments			
exercise of resourcefulness and problem-solving abilities in new and complex situations			
Comments/Score:			
identification and exploration of vocational and a-vocational passions			
Comments/Score:			
reflective delineation of values, life plans, graduation and career goals in light of hands-on experience			
Comments/Score:			

Appendix C: Odyssey Senior Distinction Application

Distinction Questionnaire
This form will ask you to share with us your experience with the Odyssey Program. We will review it, along with your completed Odyssey projects, to determine whether you graduate with distinction in Odyssey. The deadline to submit this form is 5 pm on Tuesday March 31, 2020.

Questions
1.First Name

2.Last name

3.Hendrix ID

4.Have you already have completed Odyssey credits in all six categories?

○ Yes

○ No

5.If you have a pending Odyssey credit, please describe your plans for completing it by the end of April.

6.Looking back on the credits you have completed, which Odyssey learning goal was most relevant for you and why?
Please limit your response to 500 words. You can find out more about the learning goals of the Odyssey Program here:
https://www.hendrix.edu/odyssey/odyssey.aspx?id=72348

7.How have your Odyssey experiences impacted your undergraduate career?
Please limit your response to 500 words.

8.How do you anticipate your Odyssey experiences to guide your professional and personal life beyond Hendrix?
Please limit your response to 500 words.
9.Is there anything else you would like to share with us?
This could include recommendations for the Odyssey Program or information that you'd like to share beyond the questions above. Please limit your response to 500 words.